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THE PRAYER OF SONSHIP

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THE PRAYER OF SONSHIP

BY

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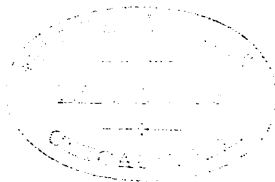
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INTRODUCTION

THE writer of this book opened our first gathering for the "Way of Renewal" among the laity by an interesting lecture in Fulham, at which I had the privilege of taking the chair, with the title "*Can a thinking Man be a Christian?*"

Although that question is not asked and answered in so many words in this book, it is not too much to say that it contains the answer to it.

The writer has first felt every doubt and difficulty himself, and that is what makes the book so interesting. How far accidents and misfortunes can be said to be the Will of God, how to reconcile the rival claims of work and worship, what worship really means, why Prayer is necessary while all the time God must be wishing the very best for us all, how to hold the truth of the Atonement without a view of it which shocks the moral sense, why we should ask God not to lead us into temptation when we are told in Scripture that "God tempteth no man"—all these and many other difficulties which have worried and

even tormented the minds of Christians in all ages, and especially in our age, will be found firmly faced, and so far as they can be, answered in this book.

I am especially grateful myself to my friend for recalling the description of God's Will as "*that good and acceptable and perfect Will of God!*" Too often we look upon that Will as something to which we have passively to submit, instead of an inspiring power with which we wish to identify ourselves and to co-operate.

Whether the readers of this book agree with all the answers given to these difficult questions or not, they will get nothing but good by their contact with the honest, straightforward and palpably sincere mind of the writer, and my own belief is that it will help many readers on both sides of the Atlantic to a stronger and more reasonable faith.

A. F. LONDON.

PREFACE

THE object of this Lenten book is simple and unpretentious, being nothing more than a study of the Lord's Prayer from one particular standpoint. Perhaps the familiarity of the subject-matter is not a disadvantage. We do not need a new religion, but a touch of freshness to illuminate the old. Much of the truth by which the world lives is as old as mankind itself, and is expressed in ancient proverbs which are too hackneyed to quote. But a literary artist arises who states the old thought in new metaphor, and behold ! the antique tool has taken to itself a new edge, and we vie with each other in our eagerness to apply it once more to the constructive work of life. I lived mentally for several years on a particular poem in which Browning had put the teaching of the New Testament into a new set of pictures.

It is much the same when a great movement sweeps over the Church and imparts new life. We are keeping next year the centenary of the Oxford Movement, but the village Church stood complete with altar, priesthood and prayer-book for many

generations before 1833. The new spirit seized on familiar things and bathed them in the light of a forgotten inspiration. I am tempted to feel that much of the perplexity and doubt with regard to a future life which trouble the world at this present moment, are due to our need of a new artistry for the old fact. The frescoes of the ancient Church which made heaven and hell such concrete realities to the mediæval mind are worse than useless to-day. But where is the modern Dante who will do for Heaven what Jeans and Eddington have done for the starry Universe?

Our little book is a humble effort to relate to contemporary life what is perhaps the most familiar thing in our religion; so familiar that a young woman to whom I once recommended it replied frankly that she found it the best soporific which she knew. We use the Lord's Prayer once at least in every service and on innumerable other occasions; it has become so easy to say it that for many of us it has become almost impossible to think it. Yet it remains the profoundest and most beautiful form of all religious devotion, as we realise when something compels us to face the challenge of its meaning.

The following pages deal with the Prayer as an anthem on Sonship, in which the theme expressed in the opening words works itself out in logical order to the end. The harmony is supplied by our Lord's

life, which displayed the same theme in action ; and woven into the melody is the minor cadence of the parable of the prodigal son.

I am of course hopeful that the book will be of use to those who are well trained in devotion, and have ascended with their Master at least some way up the Mount of Transfiguration. But I have in mind mainly the crowd who live for the most part on the plain below. The atmosphere of that plain is at present full of confusion and perplexity, with a tendency to question all traditional beliefs. What most of us need is such clearness as we can get on a few fundamental issues, simple in statement but profound in significance. Where shall we find them better stated than in the Prayer which the Perfect Son taught us to address to the Perfect Father ?

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CHAPTER I

THE SON'S CHARTER

Our Father

IN the famous allegory of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, Bunyan provided his Pilgrim with a companion named Faithful, whose chief task was to cheer him with godly converse when the road was hard. I have been entrusted this year with the great privilege of playing the part of Faithful to a large number of my fellow-pilgrims, and acting as their companion along the uphill road of Lent. One of the first things required of such a companion is that he shall have something fresh and interesting to say; and on this score I am rather nervous. The subject of this book is prayer; not so much prayer in general as that great example of it which was given to us by our Lord. And that sounds an unpromising beginning, for the most well-worn subject in religion is probably prayer, and the Lord's Prayer is as familiar to us as the alphabet itself. Countless books have been written upon it; there can be scarcely anything to say on the subject that has not been stated frequently and better in the past.

But it is these last three words that give me hope, for if the prayer be ancient and our interpretations familiar, it may be that the new and fresh element

can be supplied for us by life itself. What matters how ancient the lantern or how well known the light if the pilgrims are treading a new section of the road and the old light falls on fresh objects? Most of us would agree that we are tramping along such a new stage of the journey in these post-war days. It is a new world, even on the surface, with all its contrivances in daily use unknown to our grandparents—motor transport, cinemas, wireless, aeroplanes, multitudinous literature. Below the surface are deeper alterations due to the war, changed economic conditions and the spread of scientific knowledge. If I were asked to pick out some special characteristics of the outside world to-day, where it differed most from what I can recall of my youth, I would suggest these four :—

(i) It is *wide-viewed*. It looks out on the whole world in an endeavour to exchange national insularity for an international viewpoint. It looks back on an age-long history of development not only behind man, but also behind all his social institutions. It looks up at a vast Universe of stars which almost frightens us by its immensity.

(ii) It is *realistic*. In spite of some very decided ideals it is suspicious of any high-flown sentiment, and prides itself on gazing at life as it is, and facing facts, often in an ugly way. It prefers detective stories to romances.

(iii) It is *humanistic*, being very interested in the doings of men and inclined to accept them as it finds them, with a humorous smile at their peculiarities, a good deal of kindly sympathy and tolerance, and a

broad philanthropy. It is attracted by the baby-science of Psychology, which is trying to explain how man's mind works.

(iv) It is *restless* and unsatisfied, almost with the petulant restlessness of a sick child or of a man who has missed his vocation. There has been so much rapid change that nothing seems certain and fixed ; all old traditions are criticised, and religious beliefs do not pass unquestioned.

Now, of course, this is not an accurate description of your mind or my own ; it is just a very rough generalisation and a personal impression of that complicated mixture of good and evil which constitutes the mental attitude of our day. It is that vague thing called atmosphere, and no one escapes breathing some of it. We cannot even keep it outside our churches ; however fast we close the doors it steals through the windows, which must remain open lest the air within become stagnant. I am taking it for granted that we pilgrims all breathe it to some extent ; and now that we have got into stride together, we can pick up our ancient lantern, and see what light its familiar flame casts upon our road, facing any problem which it illuminates as frankly as we can, even when we are not absolutely certain of the solution. And that lantern, you will remember, is the familiar form of words which our Lord gave to His disciples when they asked Him to teach them how to pray.

When I am asked what is meant by prayer, I have to pause until I can find an answer wide enough to cover all its wonderful varieties. Think first of a

large congregation gathered in church or cathedral repeating well-known words, or the silent petition shared in the hearts of a whole people in the course of the war, or even during the King's illness. Contrast the bedside ritual of some small child with the agonised yearning of a strong man racked with anxiety ; or our own feeble efforts at private devotion with the meditations of some trained mystic which "break through language and escape." If my answer is to cover all these and a host of other examples, I should reply that *Prayer is any expression of man's conscious relation to a Personal God.*¹

If our definition is at all adequate, it will be seen at once that actions as well as words may partake of the nature of prayer. Normally we express what we feel for other people in speech ; for most of us it is so beautifully—and dangerously—easy. But some country youth, clumsy and tongue-tied, who walks five miles through the rain to carry her umbrella to his girl, may well express by that action a love which he is almost too inarticulate to put into words. Thousands of parents in our own country are displaying, by long years of uncomplaining toil, a devotion to their children which is a lyric poem. Actions, we say, speak louder than words, just because they often cost more. There is much truth in the old tag that Work is Prayer, provided that the work is expressing, however dimly, something that we feel towards God.

¹ Every word in the definition is meant to count. All men have a relation to God, but it will hardly emerge into prayer until it is conscious. And all intelligent prayer assumes some response from the God prayed to ; that is, it implies His Personality.

But speech and action ought, of course, to go hand in hand, each sustaining and developing the other. Inasmuch as the whole of our Lord's life on earth was manifesting His relation to God, it may truly be called the most beautiful prayer that has ever been uttered. But He put it into words for His disciples, and the Lord's Prayer and the Lord's life stand side by side as two statements of the same relation to God, one spoken and the other acted. We are keeping them very close together throughout these pages, partly because of the light which the Life throws upon the Prayer, and also to remind us that any divorce between our prayer life and our ordinary life would be utterly fatal. "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in Heaven."

There is no need to ask what this "conscious relation" was in the case of Christ; almost every child among us knows that the whole life of Jesus was dominated by the thought which is expressed in the first two words of the Prayer. His sense of sonship to a Perfect Father can be traced with complete consistency through every page of the Gospels. His first recorded utterance as a boy of twelve displayed it. It is the theme of the Sermon on the Mount which appealed to His disciples for the obedience of sons, the trustfulness of sons, the intimacy of sons. It burst out again in the darkness of Gethsemane and in the bleakness of Calvary, closing His earthly life with the same filial confidence as appeared in the bright days of the early ministry in Galilee. It appears again,

with triumphant emphasis, in the charge before the Ascension. You will find it a most instructive exercise to take a concordance and observe the frequency of our Lord's use of the title "Father," rather than the word God. Here was a title which had been voiced by the greatest of the old Hebrew prophets and handed down to the Jews of Christ's own time. He took it and by the emphasis of His teaching, but still more by living it through, gave it a width and depth which have made it the crucial word in the world's religion.

Now we must linger for a time over those two words *width* and *depth*, as everything depends on them. The whole purpose of this book is to take that thought of sonship to God, which meant everything to our Lord, and to apply it not only to our religion, but to life as we actually know it to-day. It is to be a key to our human problems, as well as a summons to prayer and worship, and we must therefore be perfectly clear as to how wide God's Fatherhood extends, and how deep it goes.

Christian theology has, of course, always ascribed to Christ a Sonship which was unique in its own right ; an eternal link with God not shared by the rest of mankind. But the Fatherhood of which He taught them in this prayer is something which as Son of Man He always shared with His disciples ; it is *our* Father, just as He so often spoke of *your* heavenly Father, My Father and *your* Father. This sonship was obviously extended to the Apostles and all the baptised after them, who should come into the family of Christ, but dare we give it a wider application ?

I hope that we may be excused from a long and intricate discussion and allowed to claim on the strength of the whole of Christ's spirit and life, that the love of the Father extends to the entire human race. For I am certain that nothing less than this will suffice for the men of our age who are so very conscious of the unity of the human family. We have moved many miles from the old lady who counted the elect as her minister and herself, with grave doubts about the minister. It might have been possible to breathe that atmosphere in a remote village fifty years ago, but it is quite impossible for anyone looking out on life on that wider plane to which it is moving so fast to-day. It is not only that I am surrounded by a multitude of kindly, decent folks, standing aloof, alas ! from Christianity, but nevertheless born as I was, passing through the same cycle of life history from childhood to age, many of whom minister to my wants so that the priest at the altar, the preacher in the pulpit and the worshipper in the pew are bound with them in the complicated net-work of life. It is not only that I look across the sea upon multitudes who belong to other religions simply because they were born into them, as I happen to have been born an Englishman. But somewhere into the picture I have to fit those countless myriads of human souls who have trodden this planet in the last quarter or half a million years, slowly building up the civilisation, the language, the thoughts, yes, and many of the religious ideas by which I live to-day. I am part of the same one stock, comrade in the same age-long march of humanity, heir of their travail

“For we are His offspring,” quoted St. Paul to the Athenians. No discussion of this question is adequate to-day if it leaves out of its purview the vast ages of mankind in pre-Christian days. And we who know from Christ how the love of a father pursued unremittingly the son who by wilful disobedience and neglect stultified the relation on his side, can have no doubt that a Father’s love has watched over the huge majority of our race who have never been conscious of that sonship in any Christian sense. But just as neglect made the fact of sonship ineffective in the case of the Prodigal, so it makes all the difference in the world to the sons of men whether they are conscious of that relation and claim it. It was that conscious entry into the covenant relation of the family which called forth from the Apostle the exulting cry, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God”; and “To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God.” It is the bringing of God’s children by creation into the covenant relation of conscious members of His family that ought to be one of the greatest spurs to all our missionary work to-day, whether in England or abroad.

So much for the width of the Fatherhood; we pass on to its depth. The phrase sounds to us the veriest truism because we have heard it, quoted it, prayed it and sung it, until we have worn the thought threadbare. In point of fact the Father-son relation of the Eternal God to humanity is so staggering a claim that reason may well boggle at it. We must pause for a moment to be certain that we have grasped

its significance, before we take a single further step of the journey.

Christ gazed out with open and serene eyes upon the Source of existence, the Creator and Sustainer of all that is, and declared that the least inadequate picture which we could form of His relation to the men, women and children whom He had created, was that of a Father to his sons. Of course it is a metaphor or analogy. We have no experience whatever of the relation of a Creator to His conscious creatures; it must transcend all human thought; so we hunt through our earthly life for some analogy that may help us. We seize for a moment on that of a King and his subjects, so prevalent in the Old Testament, but we see that it fails us on the creative side; no earthly king has called his subjects into existence. The same criticism is true of the relation of a man to his dog, popularised by Kipling; a similar relation to that fancied by Caliban about himself and the birds in Browning's famous poem. We dally with the metaphor of a potter and his pot, and discard it because a pot is nothing like a self-conscious and self-determining man. Christ came to the rescue. He taught us that in all our human experience the least inadequate analogy for the relation of God to man, is that of a parent to the child which he has brought into the world. I am neither a pot nor a dog; but I have been a son and am now a father, and I know something *from within myself*, of what that relation implies.

When I am told, as I sometimes am, that I am not to press that analogy for fear of becoming senti-

mental, I fall back upon a wonderful phrase of our Lord's; "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give good gifts to them that ask Him?" We rarely do justice to that saying. It was addressed to simple men in Galilee, who had had personal experience of sonship and possibly of fatherhood. It is a form of argument which we met in Euclid in our boyhood, and it means that when the analogy fails, it fails because it is not fair to God; that the attitude of parental love and care experienced by a procreator is only a far-away earthly reflection of the love and care of the Creator. Recent writers are quite right when they warn me not to sentimentalise the relation, for sentiment is only our poor failure and limitation of love; the affection which "spoils" is a parody of that real love which does not shrink from making high demands. But the highest meaning we can give to *love* is—willing the best for other people at whatever cost to ourselves; and if we limit God's good-will towards ordinary men and women as we know them in this world of shadows, perplexities and difficulties, to something less than that of the loving good-will of the best of human mothers towards her erring children, we are returning a direct negative to that "How much more" of Christ's.

Who would venture to estimate what those two simple opening words of the Prayer have meant to the last nineteen centuries of history? We see them leavening human society from the apostolic age onwards; the slave begins to look up, nation to

draw nearer to nation, woman to move towards her place of partnership with man in the work of life. They have been echoed by the lips of repentant sinner and canonised saint, and in the hearts of millions of the simple folks who make up the real story of humanity. Education, hospitals, charity all look back to that Christian origin, however much we may have specialised them since. To-day those same two words lie implicit behind the vast amount of kindly, humanitarian sympathy which is one of the redeeming features of our age, even when it is unconscious of its inspiration or aloof from its Inspirer. They have gained a new depth of meaning with every advance that has been made in the sense of parental love and responsibility. With the deepest meaning that our age can give to them, they stand now as the great challenge both to our religion and to our secular civilisation. For on the one hand they challenge religion as to any ideas in its popular theology which will not bear their scrutiny, while on the other hand they challenge our secular civilisation to produce a better explanation of the Universe than Christ offered.

For the secularism and religious indifference of our day are forms of "Naturalism"; that is, they take life and the world as they find them and attribute them to an unexplained "Nature" which has produced everything by a long unconscious process in the course of which man happens to have emerged from the animal world as one more fleeting incident in a purposeless story, who is wise to make the best of existence, since it has happened, and if he can find

any ground in that creed to be kind to his fellows—well, so much the better. Against this position the words “Our Father” utter a mighty protest and offer a more final explanation of the problem which Naturalism gives up. For they pierce beyond Nature to its Source in a Personal God; they give sense and meaning to the age-long process, they offer a dignity and destiny to man because of his kinship with the Ultimate Power. The alternative is clear and final and fraught with the gravest issues.

It is this last thought which gives importance to our effort this Lent to take that conception of Father and son, and trace its results both in life and in worship with a view to developing that clear consciousness of sonship as the very heart of our personal religion. We must feel that sonship in some degree before we can even start to use this Christian prayer, but every further effort at deeper prayer and communion should deepen the sense of relation which drives us to pray. There are benevolent circles as well as vicious ones, and the whole scheme of religious devotion, whether private or public, is the well-trodden road by which God’s children have found their conscious sonship through personal or family touch with the Father.

CHAPTER II

THE SON'S CHARTER (*continued*)

Is it True?

BEFORE we pass on to see how the sense of sonship works itself out through the clauses of the Lord's Prayer, we must face one further question, to which we have given the whole of this chapter as a long parenthesis. If God's Fatherhood is so profoundly important as we have urged, why does it mean so little to thousands of people about us, and why does it often count for so little in our own thoughts? I can trace three causes operative in the world without, and too often busy in my own soul. I would call them roughly the moral, the impressional and the mental causes.

The moral cause is at work whenever men are too preoccupied with other interests to care. We are all aware that our sense of any human relation can fade, if we are absorbed in other things and take no time or trouble in its cultivation, as surely as did that of the Prodigal when he was immersed in the affairs of the far country. One of the saddest things I encountered in the East End was an occasional old woman in the workhouse who believed that she had a son somewhere in the world, but had heard nothing whatever of him for years. In some distant land he

was absorbed in his own life, and to him at least, the old relation, though it still existed, meant very little. I think it did to the old mother, which gave me hopes of God.

This absorption in secular things is the great temptation of our modern civilisation with its vast array of interests and the opportunity which it offers to fill life with all sorts of things which are concrete enough to have a strong human pull—papers, magazines, novels, cinemas, motors, wireless. The old Puritan of Bunyan's day, in addition to his work in field or shop and the acquaintances of his village, had his Bible and a few serious books, so heavy that nobody now would read them. Even in the middle of the last century Browning could rely on the sunset or the flower-bell to recall men to the eternal questions. To-day we can simply turn on the wireless and drown the questioning in jazz.

It is absurd to rail against this amazing crowd of interests which applied science has added to our ordinary life; we must reckon with it, for good or evil. It may save mankind from coarser enjoyments (as I believe that it does), and may make for an easy-going, kindly, and sympathetic humanity. Its greatest risk is that it may produce a superficial mind, sliding easily and carelessly over the surface of life, and refusing to face any deeper issues. It will vulgarise us if it turns us into children on the beach, busy with our shells and sand-castles, our donkey-rides and bathing wraps, or the mere profits of our stalls, but blind and deaf to the challenge of the boundless sea, which rolls up ceaselessly upon the shore and is

indeed the real reason for our being there. Beyond that busy strip of beach is Mystery. Science cannot dispel it, but only shifts the explanations a little further back, throwing out a pier here and there from which we may take a more extended view. It is our human birthright to face that mystery with unflinching eyes, as surely as we know that one day we must venture forth alone into its ocean. One of the most insistent calls of Lent is to loosen our hold somewhat on the perfectly innocent playthings of the shore, lest the eternal challenge beat upon our ears in vain.

The second cause I have called impressional, for it is felt not by the indifferent, nor even by the intellectual only, but by all those whose experience of life seems incompatible with direction by a Loving Father. In the midst of so much pain, sorrow and tragedy they get the impression that the world has been left to run itself, with no oversight and direction from any God who cares. Many of us feel this at times, and often for long seasons. Since the war it has probably been the implicit feeling of many earnest souls who have drifted away from religion because they feel vaguely what more scholarly people would call the rigid uniformity of an impersonal Nature, indifferent to the interests of man. This problem is indeed vast and formidable; we shall encounter it again as we proceed with the Prayer. Here we can only throw out two considerations. It is indeed true that the operation of what we call the laws of Nature accounts for a vast amount of tragedy, but are we quite certain that we would

really exchange this world as we know it for one in which God was constantly interfering *from without* in the orderly sequence of things; a world in which we could never trust a cause to produce its expected result, so that we never knew quite where we were? Think it out carefully, for all creative human freedom depends upon our trust in that orderly sequence, whether we are making tunes, building houses or constructing character. And in the second place, is there not enough general benevolence throughout the world, with its lavish productiveness for human need and its balance of happiness and joy, to suggest a Father working through it? Must we concentrate on the frown and pay no heed to the smile? Some of us who are most conscious of the action of "law," when we look back upon the course of our own life, cannot dare to deny some supervising direction working through the law itself, in a way which baffles logic and defies analysis.

But whatever we can urge, the impression remains and will remain till the end of time. Job felt it, so do you and I, and so will our grandchildren. It is a cry from the heart of humanity, and in answer to that cry Christ uttered the word "Father" even in Gethsemane and on the Cross. For all of us who accept Christ as the Eternal Son, the accredited Spokesman of God, this word is a final revelation, and settles the issue.

I know that there are many good and thoughtful people to-day who hesitate to accept so high a claim for Christ, and such a unique irruption of the Supernatural into the natural world. May I add one word

to them? At the very lowest estimate Christ was a religious genius, who faced the facts of life and death with a steady gaze, and obviously saw deep into the very heart of truth. All His teaching is evidence of this. He had so profound a conviction of the Divine Fatherhood, that He lived, worked, suffered and died maintaining it. The deepest sense of sonship which this world has known, went side by side with the noblest and most powerful life; there is no escape from that. On the most practical grounds we could maintain that He had come into touch with the Reality which energises existence. Now we trust the intuitions of genius in other departments of life and act on them. Is there no reason for trusting here, putting the intuition to the test of life to see if it will work? "If any man will do the work, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God."

The third cause of enfeebled sonship is the mental, which is at work in all who find intellectual difficulty in believing even in a Personal God. I have left it to the end of the chapter so that it may be passed over by those to whom it is unmeaning, and who might well complain at having their calm and serene confidence disturbed in a Lenten book. But I dare not pass it by in silence, for intellectual questioning is rampant in the world around us, and is not absent even from our pews. The sheer intellectualist is not likely to read this book; he would require a larger one even to deal with first questions. But there are thousands who have caught this questioning attitude from the atmosphere about them, and who fancy that Biblical Criticism and Science have somehow disposed of

God, just at the time when the deepest thinkers in the scientific world have recognised that they can utter no word upon that question, which lies entirely outside their terms of reference. Let us be sure of that fact and underline it. Science can explain the whole process of broadcasting between the studio and the loudspeaker, showing how the song produced in the vocal chords sends waves of air which strike on the microphone and cause it to vibrate, the vibrations being impressed on to wireless waves and carried to the receiver which sends out new air waves which impinge on the drum of the ear where they set up by complicated machinery a stimulus which is carried to the brain by the auditory nerves. It is all intensely interesting and exciting ; but it has nothing to do with the song. Science stops, baulked before the song, the singer and the listener ; it is the musician who steps in there. In the same way Science is labouring nobly to explain the way in which this Universe conveys to us its message, by light waves, electric action, atoms. But on the message itself and its significance, the Ultimate Sender and the ultimate receiver, it is and must be silent. It belongs to a deeper insight to take the leap where Science stops and to realise the kinship between the consciousness which appreciates the music, and the Consciousness which has imprinted it on the marvellous broadcasting apparatus of the world.

It is, of course, entirely outside our scope to deal with reasons for belief in a Personal God. But I must add a word of sympathy with any who have lost their sense of God's personal reality because they have

found their childish picture of Him in human shape seated upon a throne at some point in space, too small for the vast Universe upon which our generation gazes. A thoughtful girl once told me that having lost that childish image, whenever she heard the word God she conjured up a picture of the vast black sky, strewn with innumerable stars. She was trying to do justice to the greatness of God, but was in danger of losing quality in quantity. She needed the Face of the Son of Man against that dark sky, to restore the sense of intimate personal-ness.

Even this world of ours is too big for us to envisage, so we give children an idea of its shape and extent by a small globe, or a map of the two hemispheres, with measurements expressed in figures. This is the "scientific" method, and is invaluable. But the little boy who looks out of his bedroom window upon a four-square-mile view of meadow and wood, flowers and cows, sees more of the real world than the student who is gazing at the two maps; he is nearer to reality. So we venture to think that the simplest devout soul, who has found God in Jesus—"the portrait of the Invisible God"—has got nearer to the nature of the Ultimate Reality than the scientific mind which is immersed in vastness. The great and crying need of our time is to unite the two; the map and the scene from the bedroom window, the scientific view of the Universe with the revelation of the Character of God conveyed by the Perfect Son. And I hope that we are slowly approaching it. For if Sir James Jeans, taking the elaborate constructions of mathematics which the human mind has

worked out in the study, and finding them, after infinite trouble and research, already exemplified in the Universe about him, becomes convinced that within that Universe there is a Mind which is that of a Master Mathematician, I see no reason why the loving mother should hesitate to credit that Mind with her own mother-love to an infinite degree, even though the evidence require as much seeking as Science gives to its research; unless indeed, we account mathematics a greater reality than love.

Have I knowledge? confounded it shrivels at Wisdom laid bare.

Have I forethought? how purblind, how blank, to the Infinite Care!

Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate gift,
That I doubt his own love can compete with it? Here the
parts shift?

Here, the creature surpass the Creator—the end, what Began?

Would I suffer for him that I love? So wouldst thou, so wilt
thou!

So shall crown thee the topmost ineffablest, uttermost crown—
And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor down
One spot for the creature to stand in.

Browning's *Saul*.

CHAPTER III

THE SON'S WORSHIP

Who art in Heaven; Hallowed be Thy Name

WE can now commence upon our task of watching this sense of sonship to a Perfect Father, claimed in the first two words, unfolding itself in natural and logical order through the rest of the Lord's Prayer, just as it was worked out to an inevitable conclusion in His own Life. As we might expect, the first step of that process is an act of profound "appreciation," respect as we should call it from a child to his earthly father; worship, when it is addressed by man to God.

Yet even that easy step is made easier still for childish feet by a half-step in the form of an attribute attached to the Divine Name. In our Collects we are accustomed to such an attribute following the opening words—"Almighty God Who . . . mercifully grant." In that case it leads up to a request, but here it calls us to worship. As naturally as the child says—"Mother, you are so kind and I do love you," or the man to his friend—"John, you've been frightfully generous and I am most grateful," the Perfect Son prefaces "Hallowed be Thy Name" with the ascription "Who art in Heaven."

These words were taken over by our Lord from

contemporary use; we need not stop to inquire what they meant to the Jews of the first century, but we are vitally concerned with what they mean on the lips of a worshipper to-day. If they are removing God to some place very remote from our earth, beyond the blue sky, the Heaven of our childhood in fact, they cannot possibly be squared with the teaching of Christ, Who lived in a profound consciousness of the unescapable nearness of God. He knew that the Father's immediate Presence was enfolding Him at every moment, not only in the early happy days with the disciples and enthusiastic crowds, but in the Garden, and the Judgment Hall of Pilate and on the Cross itself, with one possible, but problematic, exception.

It is that sense of intimate nearness which made His prayer natural, spontaneous and simple, and it is shot through the whole of His teaching as to secret praying in the inner chamber. A papyrus discovered last century gave us an otherwise unrecorded saying of Christ—"Lift the stone and thou shalt find Me; cleave the wood and there am I"; we cannot be sure of its authenticity, but it is certainly consistent with the life and teaching of our Lord.

We find that sense of Divine nearness long before the days of Jesus. There is a beautiful expression of it in Psalm 139—"Whither shall I go then from thy Spirit, or whither shall I go then from thy presence? If I climb up into heaven, thou art there; if I go down to hell, thou art there also." And in wonderful words the Psalmist goes on to describe how that Spirit was present in his mother, forming

the marvellous little body of the unborn child. The same idea is to be found almost as an axiom in the best of the Greek thinkers, and St. Paul assumes it when he addresses their degenerate descendants at Athens ; " Though He is not far from each one of us : for in Him we live, and move and have our being." It was popularised in England by the great poets of the nineteenth century. Wordsworth felt it in the hills of his beloved lake-land :

For I have learned to look on Nature.
... And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thought.

Tennyson revelled in it :

Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.

While Browning bade us look on every bramble bush as being afire with God. But it is not only poetry that claims it ; science is aware that precisely the same laws are at work in the furthest star as in the atoms of this page, and if they be God's operation He must be absolutely co-extensive with His Universe. It is needless to add that the thought is the very life-breath of religion.

But now we must face a difficulty, for a God Who is present in every atom of an inconceivably vast Universe is, of course, impossible to picture, and there is always the danger that our imagination shall reduce Him to Something in the nature of a vague influence pervading everything. " I suppose He is a sort of force," said a boy of thirteen to me the other day ; and I shrewdly suspect that when we say,

"God is Spirit," many a modern mind thinks of an indefinite current, or an all-embracing ether, which would reduce God to something like the unconscious life process at work in my bodily organs, rather than like my conscious mind which directs and controls my body from above, and makes it obey my will. Let us be perfectly clear that an unconscious universal process may sound poetic, but it isn't God, in any sense that we can recognise.¹ Though God is so near, He must also be *above*, living in His own realm of spirit, high above the plane of our visible life, so that space and distance do not count as they do with us. "Above" can be immediately "close" at the same time. Mr. Wells has given us some delightful stories to suggest how a fourth-dimensional world might interpenetrate closely with ours of three dimensions, just as our three-dimensional world in which the butterfly flits in the sun, touches the two-dimensional world of flat surface on which the caterpillar crawls.² The Above-nearness of Heaven as the realm of Spirit is worth an effort to think out, for it not only helps us to feel the universal Presence of a *Personal* God, but it is of immense significance to those whose dearest have passed from this plane, and to whom the thought of a distant separation is intolerable.

Now the moment we have said, "Who art in

¹ The current idea of a God Who is coming into consciousness seems to me almost humourously suburban, being based upon a developing process in our little corner of the whole. The student will recognise in this paragraph a laboured attempt to put the ideas of immanence and transcendence into popular form.

² We have to surrender the term "fourth dimension" to science for another purpose, but the illustration still holds good.

Heaven," and have attributed to Him that above-ness in the spiritual realm, however near, we have recognised our need to look upwards when we realise that Presence, which means that we are taking the first step on the road to worship. The Headmaster may stand in the first-form room, but little Jones knows that he brings with him the atmosphere of a higher realm, which calls for an attitude of response different from that evoked by the boy in the next seat, and he makes an effort to rise to it ; yes, even should he be his own father, or if he happen to meet him in the friendly intercourse of the cricket field. We all know men of such innate refinement that their very presence in a room creates an atmosphere which the most vulgar has to respect. When the ancient words of the Liturgy bid us "Lift up your hearts," as we approach the Divine Presence in the Eucharist, they are calling us to make that effort to reach up to God on His own plane, which is the heart of worship. Very beautifully has Dr. Butler filled the summons out :

Lift every gift that Thou Thyself hast given ;
Low lies the best till lifted up to Heaven :
Low lie the bounding heart, the teeming brain,
Till, sent from God, they mount to God again.

Let us follow that thought further. Worship is one of the most wonderful things in the world, as it is one of the oldest ; it deserves much more serious consideration than the world is giving it at the present moment. It probably originated in the remote past from man's innate sense of awe and reverence before what was mysterious and sublime. It has had a

strange and chequered history since then, becoming involved in all sorts of curious perversions—in-cantations, sacrifices, fetishes—and it is very hard to escape entirely from that old history, as is proved to-day when some hard-headed materialist fastens a mascot on his motor car. It belongs to the depths of our being and is shot through with emotional colouring. We can no more talk about it as a mere affair of cold reason than you can ask a young man to cut out the romance and choose his wife on purely intellectual grounds. But the thought inherent in it all is the lifting up of ourselves towards something higher than we are ; we have preserved that inner meaning very beautifully in the English word, which is shortened down from worth-ship, and means acclaiming the worth of something greater than our own, the admission of a claim from above. That sense survives in the delightful old phrase in which the bridegroom states the value of the bride to him against the claim of any other woman in the world ; it is also retained in our address to a magistrate. But for the most part we keep the word now for our acknowledgment of the Supreme Value of God, whether we are acclaiming that value by our lips or by our lives.

Consider for a moment the extraordinary importance of this acclaiming of worth or value. Every man has his own table of values, a personal price-list brought to the affairs of life ; they are very different and they sometimes alter as life goes on. Years ago I had a friend who was a keen theological student and I used to go to see him for the express purpose of

discussing books ; but he became engaged, and for a short time the books were laid aside and I was taken round to look at old furniture. A year or two later when I called, I had to crawl round on the floor and amuse the baby. The highest value in the list may vary from money-making to the study of the stars or the passionate service of mankind. The important thing is that you can roughly tell a man's own worth if you know his private scale of values, for we are always lifting up ourselves towards that which we really value. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." If our list of values is inverted and our *up* becomes *down*, we are ascending downwards. Lots of things in life are worthy of worth-ship in its literal sense, just as hero-worship can ennoble a boy if the hero himself is noble. The man who prides himself on the manly independence with which he worships nothing, is really proclaiming his own value as supreme in his world, a particularly bleak form of idolatry. It was this which made the case of the Pharisee in the Temple so hopeless compared with that of the Publican ; he had ceased to strain upwards to anything higher than his poor image of himself. The Publican may not have lifted up his eyes to Heaven, but he was at least conscious of the infinite height to which his soul needed lifting.

The average man's suspicion about worship is probably due to his connecting it with adulation, cajolery, flattery, bribery of God, but all these things are really relics of a by-gone age when men worshipped gods beneath themselves. The Old Testament speaks

of Jehovah being "jealous" of worship given to other gods, and we query the adjective. But if it means that God disapproved of men directing their souls downward to lower deities instead of upwards to Him, would one of us feel otherwise if his own son made a hero of some worthless scamp who was leading him downhill, in place of giving that respect to his own father who was keen for his real progress? All the old relics of heathenism disappear from our worship when it is based on sonship. We cannot offer to our Heavenly Father the sort of respect which would be dishonouring to a decent parent.

And now we can turn to our Lord's worship of the Perfect Father. It was, of course, two-fold, in action and in word; the General Thanksgiving has taught us that we must show forth His praise "not only with our lips but in our lives." The whole ministry of Christ was worship in its most literal sense, placing God and His will above all the other things in life which men value. Comfort, honours, wealth, home, kindred, life itself were all subordinated to the Worth of God. He summed it up for His disciples in one phrase—Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.

That sounds tremendously and frighteningly exalted; there is no escaping its challenge to a world which is mainly occupied with the pursuit of other ends. Here is the scale of values of the Perfect Son, and few of us, certainly not the writer, would dare to produce his personal list for comparison. When we are confronted by that wonderful Life of the Perfect Son, and frightened by its challenge, it is com-

forting to recall the words of that real saint of God, John Keble, whose voice a century ago sounded the call which ushered in the Oxford Movement, written in his famous morning hymn and restored to us more fully in the English Hymnal :

We need not bid, for cloistered cell,
Our neighbours and our work farewell,
Nor strive to wind ourselves too high
For sinful man beneath the sky ;

The trivial round, the common task,
Would furnish all we ought to ask—
Room to deny ourselves, a road
To bring us daily nearer God.

“A road to bring us daily nearer God.” With all the difficulty of the road which Christ trod, He never painted God’s Will for man as a perpetual path to Calvary. He delighted in the simple joys and the common life of ordinary people, for He was no John Baptist. He showed a sympathetic understanding of the limitations of the human nature shared by His disciples—the boyish ambition of James and John for the chief seats, the struggle among the Twelve for precedence, their placing of safety first when they deserted Him on the last night. Who of us can honestly say that he knows what it is consistently to place God first ? We simple folks, caught up in the machinery of the world’s work have manifold ends which we value ; and some of them are decent and clean and desirable enough—children, love, work, beauty, humour. We dare not press this claim of God in such a way as to rob the world of its innocent richness and to convert His garden into a barren

wilderness. But we can urge in all humility that at least our values must be such as Christ, with all His human sympathy and understanding, would approve, and we can pray that if ever the call of God comes to us to subordinate "what most we prize" to the claim of an insistent duty, He will give us strength to render that last and mightiest act of worship. It is those who have trodden furthest with Christ along that road who have raised the values of the world most.¹

So much for worship "in our lives." There are many to-day who would go so far, but hesitate to admit the duty of worship with the lip. They tell me that they cannot imagine the Father of our Lord wanting it. I must repeat that I think such people are hampered by ideas of worship which the world ought to have outgrown. Even the prophet Micah who poured profound contempt upon the empty ceremonial or the animal sacrifice and asked what God could require of us save "to do justly and to love mercy" ended his question with the words—"and to walk humbly with Thy God." Apart from what our formal worship may mean to God—and that we can only estimate on the analogy of what the spoken respect of a child really means to the best

¹ The wording of this paragraph is an attempt to comply with that memorable injunction of Keble as to not winding ourselves too high. I am convinced that one of the greatest dangers that beset moral teachers, whether they be parents, school teachers or preachers is to set before their learners, for the most excellent purpose of edification, lofty ideals which are not too high (probably no ideal can be that), but so high that their very remoteness gives an impression of unreality, unless they be carefully related to the practical possibilities and the decided limitations of both teacher and taught. The risks of unconscious insincerity involved on both sides are obvious and real.

human parent—that spoken worship is immensely important to us. Most people have learned the very idea of lifting up their hearts to God in their lives through having learned its necessity first in Church ; the very thought of God depends largely upon our concentration on Him in our public worship. I believe that was the order in history ; first services, then service ; social religion and afterwards conduct. Corporate worship binds together a congregation or a nation in one of the strongest bonds that exist. It supplies a way of escape from self-worship, that over-weening consciousness of self which some of us would have to confess with Anatole France to be the spoiling of our life. Christ took it for granted that a son's " appreciation " of God which expressed itself in action in the world, would naturally express itself also when two or three were gathered together in His Name. He gave the practice the approval of His example by attending the synagogue " as His custom was " on the Sabbath Day, and by going up to Jerusalem to share in the great feasts of His nation.

We can imagine what those experiences of corporate worship with Christ must have meant to the disciples. There are times when I catch the glimpse of a vision of ideal worship by a modern congregation which is dominated by the thought of sonship. Men, women and children of all ages, social positions, temperaments, interests and intellectual attainments, who are engaged during the week in various occupations, assemble on Sunday in God's House, which is hallowed by a net-work of spiritual associations, and acclaim the One Father as supreme, bringing all

their varied tasks and interests into a great unity under the claims of God. As sons, they thrill together with a new sense of family life, and with a new inspiration to carry back into their daily work. Those who have seen the building of a church in a new suburb will have had definite proof of the way in which a centre for worship can give unity to a whole neighbourhood, and provide a "soul" for what was before merely a collection of separate families in streets of red brick houses.

But sorrowfully we have to admit that the picture is an ideal; that very few of us have reason to be satisfied about the present position of public worship in England. There are many happy exceptions, but small congregations, a critical or factious spirit, an impression of vitality below the best, the abstention in increasing numbers of our younger people—all these things are providing us with anxious searchings of heart as to the part which corporate worship is playing in the life of the nation at large to-day.

It is more easy than profitable to apportion blame, whether it be on the clergy, the services, the worshippers or the outside world. The first may well be left to the earnest discussions which take place in clerical conferences and the second is a difficult and thorny matter, as the history of the 1928 Prayer Book proved to us. Revision of services is one of those questions which cannot be discussed with the open mind which we bring to a problem in arithmetic; past history and old associations play so large a part in the consideration.

But fortunately our task this Lent is not to revise

our Prayer Book, but to make our part in the public service as acceptable to God and as helpful to our companions as possible. We can sum it up, I think, in our need to bring into our Church worship as deep a sense of sonship as we are aiming at in our private prayers.

This should have two results. First we shall remember that since worship is a lifting up of our hearts to God, a giving rather than a getting, we must recapture the spirit with which the old builders of cathedrals felt that nothing was worth giving to God unless it was the best of which they were capable, even in the carving of some unseen leaf upon the top of a capital. The earnestness which the single worshipper carries into a well-known prayer matters to the effect of the whole service. We realise this as obvious in the case of the parts played by the clergy, choir or other Church officials. It is less obvious, but none the less true in its degree, with every member of the congregation who is trying to make a well-known prayer live again.

The second requirement of the corporate worship of sons is that we shall maintain a high consciousness of the family life, and avoid any trace of sectional feeling in our common approach to the Father. At present any uniformity in our methods is impossible, but it is possible to avoid a propagandist or sectarian spirit.

So much for our own part. When it comes to the share of blame attached to the nation at large for its lukewarmness in response, we must speak with care. We must remember that an interest in Church

worship, as in most other things, grows with cultivation and ought to be developed in childhood. We are not surprised if a man is bored with a lecture on mediæval architecture if he has never developed a taste for the subject. The future of worship in England is bound up largely with the training of our children in their early years.

But the matter goes really deeper than that. Public worship is a natural gathering together of those who are conscious of their common sonship to God and feel impelled to express it corporately. If a nation feels little of this impulse it is probable that its sense of sonship is burning low through preoccupation with other interests. We may have struck rather a depressing patch in human history such as no reform of services or methods would cure. But we refuse to be depressed ourselves, for the world has passed through much drier periods in past history. Inspiration was flagging badly a hundred years ago when the Spirit behind the Oxford Movement suddenly blew the embers again into a blaze; and the position was worse still a century earlier before the rise of Wesley. We wait in faith for such a new breathing forth from God into the world, remembering that it is our part to do all we can to prepare His way. When I am tempted to become at all pessimistic on the score of small congregations, I recall from East End experience how even a few worshippers could do something to keep alive a gleam of implicit religion among a whole population, and I realise afresh the importance of those who faithfully tend the fire, in expectation of the coming of the Breeze.

CHAPTER IV

THE SON'S APPROVAL OF THE FATHER'S PURPOSE

Thy Kingdom come

ALIKE as son and father I think that I should expect a sense of sonship which had risen to the profound appreciation (in its literal sense) which we call worship, to evolve next into an expression of obedience ; that the boy who has said, " I respect " should follow it up immediately with the words " and I obey." But a moment's reflection warns us that there are several forms of obedience, differing according to the incentive which lies behind. There is enforced submission to authority, such as we may have in military discipline or in a country ruled by a Dictator. There is also the joyous and willing obedience of those who see and approve of the purpose lying behind the order, or at least love and trust the commander sufficiently to be confident of that purpose, even if it passes their comprehension. We can all see how necessary the former may often be ; it is essential on the field of battle or in a country torn by revolution. But the world has moved onward to the latter which we all now feel to be a higher type, whether it be of a citizen living in a democracy (though it is sometimes forgotten what

severe demands this makes upon the training of the citizen) or in the case of a son with his father. There are few modern parents who would not infinitely prefer to labour for the obedience which is based on love, trust and approval of purpose, rather than for the blind submission which was exacted in earlier days. Christ took the world forward with that leap when in the Sermon on the Mount He asked the disciples for the joyous obedience of sons, in contrast to the prevailing attitude to the Law. Not only are we persuaded that it is a higher thing in itself, but most of us would agree that with all its risks and dangers, the more modern method has been justified by its results. We are not therefore surprised that before the Perfect Son expresses to the Father His willing obedience, He passes to it by way of an endorsement from the depths of His heart of that Father's purpose . . . "Thy Kingdom come (on earth, as it is in Heaven)."

God's purpose ! It is a bold thing for us to discuss, and never more so than in the present day when we are all somewhat staggered by the immensity of God's Universe, in comparison with the planet which is man's home. It was easy some centuries back to imagine God's purpose through His whole creation as centred around man, when sun, moon and stars alike circled round his earth to give him light and to mark his time. But the position is otherwise to-day when we look out upon a million million stars pouring out inconceivable energy into unimaginable vastness, from the standpoint of our dear old mother earth, revolving round one of

them, and by no means the greatest. It is true that the prevailing theory asserts that our earth may be the only body in space upon which life, as we know it, is possible, and that a planetary system round a central sun is something in the nature of a freak. But I do not feel confident that this is the last word, and I am prepared to surrender quite cheerfully the view that God's whole eternal purpose is summed up entirely in the human race. With a recent writer one feels that the frame is too big for the picture.¹

But fortunately we are not concerned with the whole purpose of God, but with His purpose for this world which is our home. And this, Christ assured us quite definitely, is the coming of the Kingdom of God. It is delightful to notice the way in which Christ took phrases which were on the lips of His nation, and filled them out with a new wealth of meaning. For many years the Jewish people had been waiting for the Kingdom of God. When John Baptist appeared by Jordan proclaiming that it was imminent, the whole people flocked down to the wilderness in their eagerness to welcome the advent of that for which they all longed. The phrase meant different things to different sections of the nation, as any commentary will explain, from a material Utopia under a descendant of David, to something far more spiritual and remote. On the lips of Christ it was elevated to signify the Father's purpose for His earthly sons.

But when we try to explain in words the precise meaning of this Kingdom or Reign of God, we find

¹ Dr. Matthews, *God in Christian Thought and Experience*.

that we cannot restate it in some alternative phrase or simple definition ; it is too vast and fundamental. The passion for definition sometimes becomes a danger. You can define a book or a door, because they both belong to classes of objects easily understood. But how are you going to define for me your friend Smith, who possesses a personality of his own which is unique ? You cannot define him, you can only illustrate, which you proceed to do by telling me a series of anecdotes about his life and character, from which I have to build up such a portrait as I can.

And inasmuch as the Kingdom of God is unique, Christ explained it in the same way by a series of illustrations in stories. As regularly as the nursery-story starts, " Once upon a time," these parables of Christ commence with the words, " The Kingdom of God is like " ; and there follow a host of diverse images to help us to do justice to the greatness of the conception. Here are three—a grain of mustard seed which becometh a great tree, so that the birds of the air can lodge in the branches of it ; leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened ; a merchant seeking goodly pearls who, when he had found one pearl of great price sold all that he had and bought it. All these tell us something about the Kingdom of God, and yet could any three illustrations be more unlike ?

We take the first and realise at once that here is a delightful picture of the Catholic Church. It starts with the tiny seed of the twelve Apostles and it

grows into that mighty organisation which to-day spreads throughout the world, with the life of the Spirit of God flowing from root to branch and from branch to each individual leaf upon the utmost twig. We even venture to give meaning to the detail of the birds in the branches, since those without the Church gain something from its shade.

But as soon as we are satisfied that we have caught the precise meaning of the Kingdom, we are confronted with the picture of the leaven and its slow permeation of the whole lump of dough, till every particle has become infused; and here we are challenged to a deeper conception. This Kingdom is something spiritual which gradually pervades all the lump of human life; something which springs from Christ and works into the education, the legislation and the social relations of the world in the remarkable way in which all these have been gradually Christianised by slow inoculation, sometimes through the action of corporate religion and sometimes apart from it; His Spirit which worked in the hearts of the crowds of Galilee, and has never ceased to function since.

While we are trying to bring these two conceptions into the same focus we hear the words, "The Kingdom of God is within you,"¹ and we are called upon to do justice to the picture of the merchant with his personal discovery of the priceless pearl. The Kingdom has become something in the heart of an individual, a possession so precious that for its sake men and women, and even children, have not hesitated to give life itself.

¹ Or "among you."

These three parables alone are sufficient to prevent us from trying to define what Christ has not defined, and yet through them all we catch a glimpse of something great enough to embrace them all. We can imagine our beloved land fallen through some revolution into a disastrous state of anarchy and disorder in which all that is best in the national life is perishing. Into this disorder returns the heir of the royal line, who proceeds to rally round him the best elements of law and order and discipline. He forms them into an organised party of loyalists—you cannot do much effectively without organisation—in direct touch with the Monarch, analogous to the Catholic Church. But distinct from this party, and largely because of it, there will spread a less definite spirit of loyalty to the Monarchy and its ideals, making more vaguely for a restoration of love and order and happiness ; the heaven is at work. While every man or woman throughout the country, whether within or without the party, who rediscovers the principles of loyalty and patriotism, and lives by them, may well be said to have England in his heart. This approaches the meaning, though no illustration must be pressed too far.

There is one serious respect at least in which this last picture fails us to-day, in that it speaks of a restoration. This would have sounded perfectly correct to our grandparents, who saw the work of Christ as the recovery of a state of righteousness lost in Eden. But it fails our generation, who have been brought up to think of that Reign of God as the goal of a long process of development from the

tinest beginnings, in which God has been active through untold ages. The story of evolution on this earth is a marvellous narrative. It starts from a lifeless world of barren rocks and sea, in which appears a tiny cell containing life ; it goes on to tell how that life, with a wonderful power of reproduction, variation and adaptation, spread and covered the whole earth with the myriad forms of different species of living creatures, with ever-increasing complexity and possibilities. From one or other of such species emerged man, and with the arrival of our first human ancestors started that long history of which only the last few chapters and a few odd leaves from earlier days remain to us. But all through that long progress from the first cell upwards, we can trace a forward movement, not always regular or steady, sometimes strangely chaotic, which has developed into the civilisation, the thought, the language, the social institutions, the kindliness, the moral values and many of the religious ideas which we prize so much to-day. In the pre-human stage the development was effected through Nature herself, but since the arrival of man the progress has depended largely on his conscious action and choice.

This is the picture which has replaced the story of the Garden of Eden in the minds of practically all educated people to-day, and we have to interpret the Kingdom of God against this background. The only real difficulty in the matter is that though the story is a thrilling one, it is distinctly sad. The upward process before man came was due to the fact that life had a marvellous innate power of varying

its form, and the forms less capable of surviving were weeded out by the ruthless methods and the heavy hand of Mother Nature. We must not over-blacken the picture of jungle savagery; recent thought has taught us to modify considerably Tennyson's description of "Nature red in tooth and claw." But there is enough in that first long chapter to give us a lengthy pause. And the second great chapter which begins with the appearance of man is accompanied by much that is sheer stark tragedy, though here again we must not exaggerate, or credit earlier races with quite the same sensitiveness to pain and misery which we possess to-day.

Now this upward progress must have been purposed or accidental. It is not easy to imagine a third course, whatever high-sounding names we bestow upon it. And I hope you will agree that to think of man and his consciousness and his love and heroism as a mere accident, that simply happened, is just impossible. I believe that many of the greatest scientists would say the same to-day; it involves too great a strain upon our credulity. It would mean that a dead earth had, by sheer accident, produced something which could weigh it, measure it, use its manifold resources, respond to its beauty, or even turn round on it with bitter reproaches for having given him birth. Read a little about the marvellous mechanism of the eye or the elaborate contrivances of the human ear, and ask yourself frankly whether it is credible that they should have been produced by a series of lucky shots, with no controlling purpose. And the moment I have granted a purpose in the age-long story, I can pick

up again our ancient lantern, and allow its light to shine out upon the mystery. For the Mind behind the process is Our Father, and His purpose is the coming of His Kingdom. We turn back to the first verse of the Bible and we read, "In the beginning GOD"; or better still we take those wonderful opening verses of St. John's Gospel and repeat after that great seer—"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by Him; He was the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." We see hatred and selfishness giving way before love and co-operation and sacrifice until the culmination is reached in the perfect love of God as displayed in the Cross on Calvary, when "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." And through it all we catch a glimpse of that mighty activity of the Father working out His purpose towards the coming Kingdom on a scale as vast as the world, and by mysterious methods which pass our understanding.

Yes, let us leave in that word *mysterious*, for no one can fully explain to us the darker side of the picture. Why, we ask in our perplexity, this long and toilsome process full of pain and suffering, towards the Kingdom, rather than its immediate establishment in a perfect world? Here our little human minds stand baffled. Many thinkers to-day have replaced the Fall in Eden by some earlier and more universal Fall at the very beginning of the world's history. The last Lambeth Conference suggested that man's free-will had some faint beginning far back at the commencement of all life, which took a wrong turn from the

start. Others would maintain that perhaps the course which the world's development followed was the only one consistent with the great purpose of the Father in His creation of the souls which His love required. None of us can dogmatise on this great mystery.¹

But whatever the *origin* of the struggle one thing is clear ; that the love of a Father has been at work in the process, wresting good out of evil and using even the dark setting for bringing in a Kingdom of love, as was demonstrated in the victorious tragedy of Calvary. It is in this mysterious world that men have learned to take their part in co-operating with God to develop a Kingdom of creative sons, rather than of blindly obedient servants. I remember that the father of the prodigal let his son go out, even though it meant wrecking for the time his purpose for the family happiness. I recall those wonderful words of Browning :

As it were better, youth
Should strive, through acts uncouth
Towards making, than repose on aught found made.

I think of the part which freedom plays in the char-

¹ I have set out here three views with regard to the age-long problem of the origin of evil in the world ; (i) a premundane Fall, as taught by Origen and developed recently by Dr. Williams in his Bampton Lectures for 1924 ; (ii) a rudimentary "choice" possessed by the first elements of creation, so that even the electron may be conceived as taking the wrong leap ; or (iii) the possibility of evil being involved in the very constitution of the world, the conditions of God's creative purpose being outside the range of human speculation. The question occurs again in our consideration of accidental disasters (page 61), the origin of sin (page 96) and the nature of temptation (page 105). In all cases we have presupposed these possible explanations of the origin, and have tried to see what light the Fatherhood of God can throw upon the existing facts.

acter of an Englishman in whose nation it has been built up through long centuries of effort after self-government, compared with liberty in a race who have it suddenly thrust upon them, and despite all the mystery I acclaim the coming of the Father's Kingdom of co-operating sons.

There are two practical lessons which this long perspective urges on the souls of our generation, and the first is a message of hope. When we grow impatient at the imperfections of human life and cry out in pessimism that the Kingdom tarrieth and our Lord delayeth His coming, it is well to turn back to those pages of the past and see what a mighty advance God has made towards the achievement of His Kingdom of love. It is a salutary warning against all hopelessness.

Thy Kingdom come ! on bended knee
The passing ages pray ;
And faithful souls have yearned to see
On earth that kingdom's day.

But the slow watches of the night
No less to God belong ;
And for the everlasting right
The silent stars are strong.

The second lesson is the claim which the progress of the race makes upon our loyalty, for we have taken the words as the cry of thousands of generations of humanity as God leads us on towards His Kingdom. To stand aloof from the battle now, even by falling below the moral and spiritual standards to which the past has struggled, is not only unfaithful to the purpose of the Father, but disloyal to our comrades

throughout that long past, who have sustained the fight and brought the Kingdom nearer.

That thought leads on to the meaning of this clause for our practical life. On the lips of our Lord it was not only a prayer, but a dedication of His life to co-operate with the Father in achieving His purpose. He carried it as a battle-cry through the villages of Galilee and into the streets of Jerusalem itself, when He went there to die so as to establish the Kingdom. It had as wide a meaning in His life as in His teaching ; and we can trace all His pictures in His methods. He gathered the Twelve and organised them as the nucleus of the Catholic Church ; He spread His message broadcast and healed the sick and the insane ; “ If I by the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the Kingdom of God is come among you.” He took infinite care in His dealing with single souls to build up in them that obedience to the King’s will which was the pearl of great price.

They are still words of self-dedication as well as prayer, and the Kingdom is still as great as in the parables. Every soul converted from heathenism and added to the Church by heroic missionary effort, every baby baptised and brought up in the fold is hastening the Kingdom of God. So is the enthusiastic search for truth on the part of thinker and scientist, the devoted labour of social workers in schools, clubs, Parliament, Peace Conferences, housing associations ; all the activities which leaven life with the spirit of Christ and work to make the world a place not only safe for democracy or fit for heroes. but fit also for the sons of God.

But it includes as well the finding of the pearl by the individual seeker ; the building up of the reign of God in a man's own heart. Every wish brought into captivity to Christ, every bad habit cured by Lenten discipline, every fruit of the Spirit fostered in the soul of myself or another, is a very real coming of the Kingdom.

It is always hard to keep a large idea balanced, and each generation is inclined to stress one or other of the different aspects of the Kingdom. The great Evangelical Movement of the Eighteenth Century laid most emphasis on personal religion as the possession of the individual soul ; the conversion of each man from anarchy to loyalty. We are inclined to-day to regard that position as too individualistic ; we should prefer even Bunyan's pilgrim to have made his salvation a more social affair. But the debt which the Kingdom owes to the men and women who have taken trouble to establish it in their own souls is beyond reckoning, as is shown by our hymn books as well as by the records of social service and philanthropy.

The Oxford Movement in an effort to redress the balance laid emphasis on the parable of the tree, with its more corporate conception of the Catholic Church. Its influence extended out far beyond the Church of England, and resulted in a larger conception of the Kingdom in most sections of our English religious life.

Perhaps it would be true to say that in our own time the tendency is towards the picture of the leaven ; that vaguer spreading of the Christian spirit

throughout life, and the development of charity, mercy and kindness in all our social dealings until a reflection of Heaven is created in our own world. There is much that may encourage us here, when we are concerned about the slow development of organised religion.

But I am not convinced that the present emphasis is the last word or that the attainment of Utopia on earth is the full meaning of the coming of the Kingdom of God. For one thing, it is hard to imagine its stability in this world ; for another it is not sufficient in itself fully to justify the purpose of the Father. That future Heaven on earth, the goal of the Evolutionist, would be enjoyed by those who had not built it ; we do not grudge them that, but we are concerned for the myriads through countless generations who would have laboured and suffered and died for the coming of that Kingdom with no share in the consummation of their labours. It would be like the case of a general who gains his objective at last, but with the loss of practically his whole army in the venture. Even Mr. Wells feels the injustice of that, and in one vision of such a perfect world almost sighs for a reincarnation for those whose labour and loyalty and suffering in the past have made it possible. The attainment of such a Kingdom on earth is a noble ideal to strive for, but perhaps its greatest achievement is that which is built up in the soul of the co-operating son, and carried with him forward to a goal beyond this earth. Only by personal immortality can we make rhyme and reason of any of the ultimate problems of this strange world. The

Kingdom of God moves higher into the clouds, the nearer we approach to it; its ultimate meaning transcends anything we can imagine on earth. The pattern of it is laid up in the heavens.¹

So we go forward in confidence, with the great purpose of God inscribed upon our banners.

He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat ;
He is sifting out the hearts of men before his judgment seat.

O be swift, my soul, to answer Him ; be jubilant my feet.

Since God is marching on !

Or, in the simpler language of the Perfect Son . . .
Thy Kingdom come !

¹ Plato's *Republic*, IX, 592.

CHAPTER V

THE SON'S OBEDIENCE

Thy Will be done on earth as it is in Heaven

FROM approval of the Father's purpose the sense of sonship passes on to willing and joyous obedience. These two things are not quite the same, for the first is a matter of judgment and trust, while the second is an act of will. But they are so closely related that "Thy Kingdom come," and "Thy Will be done" are uttered in the same breath, and the trumpet sound of the former clause is carried forward into the latter, which is the acclamation, rather than the acceptance, of the Will of the Perfect Father.

And therein lies one of life's minor tragedies, for probably on the strength of Christ's use of the words in the Garden of Gethsemane, we have transposed them from the major to the minor key, and a vigorous battle-cry has been reduced to a murmur of submission; we have even gone out of our way to build around this stirring phrase a perfect network of pathetic associations. I have seen it frequently on the stone crosses of children in our London cemeteries; there is a hymn in our most popular Hymnal which gravely recites a catalogue of human woes, and closes each verse with these glorious words. The impres-

sion has gone so deep that quite safely I can challenge the reader as to the tone of voice he would adopt if called on suddenly to recite this text. And of course it is all hopelessly unchristian, in line with the old tradition by which we called storm or accident an Act of God, and so converted a Loving Father into something worse than the harshest of puritans.

For this conception is opposed to the spirit and teaching of the Bible, even in the best parts of the Old Testament ; in the New Testament I can recall only two instances where the words appear to have a directly submissive meaning ; the cry in Gethsemane and the regret of St. Paul's friends at Cæsarea when he set out for Jerusalem. There are several others which indicate that the Will of God may include our suffering for the right. These cases we shall have to consider hereafter. There is little merit in these days in quoting text against text. But I would like to ask you again to take a concordance and turn up the words "will of God" and note their usual happy setting in the Bible texts. I will only quote three : "I delight to do Thy Will, O my God" ; "It is not the Will of your Heavenly Father that one of these little ones should perish" ; "That ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect Will of God."

Now there are obviously occasions in life as we shall see later, when patient submission to some unwelcome experience is a noble virtue, but to regard submissive resignation as a main Christian characteristic is bringing us dangerously near to an Eastern fatalism, and does scant justice to Christian

joy. While to reduce the Will of God to something primarily medicinal is surely a travesty of a Heavenly Father.

The whole life of Christ was a vigorous acclamation of that perfect Will, and I do not think that we have quite done justice to the serene joyousness of His ministry. He knew that God wanted His children happy, but of course with the lasting happiness that goes with clean souls, high ideals, unworried minds and healthy bodies. His healing of sick bodies and distorted minds simply cannot be reconciled with the belief that physical illness and mental trouble are something directly sent by God as the Father's Will for the sufferer, otherwise that healing ministry would not have been what the Pharisees called it, Satan rising up against Satan, but God working against God. Our duty is to consider this clause with the first two words of the Prayer upon our lips and the sense of sonship in our minds, asking what the most ideal of earthly parents would will for his own children. Then we may dare to approach to some conception of what our Heavenly Father's Will for us must be.

I have laboured this point at some length because it is of vital importance to all that follows. On our lips to-day these words, "Thy Will be done," should mean three things; first a trust that God's Will as manifested in the world about us is always good; secondly, a prayer in which we try to lift up our wills more nearly to the level of His, thirdly a dedication of our wills to help God to effect His own. And all these three depend upon our highest possible con-

ception of what God's Will may mean. Every time it is mentioned in the next few pages, I want you to add in your minds the words, "Our Father," and "That good, and acceptable and perfect Will of God."

The first thing for which the words call is an act of faith that wherever the Will of God is actually operating in the world it is good. As boldly as Plato took the thought of the goodness of God and applied it relentlessly in the Second Book of the Republic as a touchstone of the popular theology of his day, so we must take the good and acceptable and perfect Will of the Heavenly Father, and in its light examine the world in which He has placed us. That very difficult task we have reserved for the concluding part of this chapter.

The second summons of the clause is to remember that when we use these words as a prayer we are trying to lift up our wills to that of the Heavenly Father, being convinced that He Wills for us, for our children and all others for whom we pray, something better and grander than the best of us can possibly will. We can allow no exception to that. The idea that prayer is trying to persuade God to Will something better than He intended would be humorous if it were not so pathetic. It is one of those relics which have come down to us from the far past, when men worshipped gods which were unworthy of their worship.

The third summons of the clause is to dedicate those wills of ours to His service, and to assist in the accomplishment of that perfect Will. It is a

glorious battle-cry, like the previous clause ; that is why we have urged so insistently that it shall be uttered in the major key. And it is a cry of action rather than of passive acquiescence. It is not the lifting up of our desires only, those wishes which may never be interpreted into deeds, but our *will*, the name we give to our whole personality when it is energising to accomplish. Religion has a mighty interest in the will ; it is not concerned with the emotions only, though the emotions are of extraordinary importance in stimulating the will to activity. Many of the finest things in the world to which men have devoted their wills for years, have had their origin in a profound feeling. We must not despise the feelings, but their value depends largely upon whether they sting the will to action. An insistence on this would have kept both repentance and love on a higher level.

How can we bring our wills to assist God's perfect Will ? Mainly I suppose by helping Him to remove the hindrances to its accomplishment. For there are hindrances, unless we are to believe that the present condition of the world is exactly what God wills for it. If it were, we should scarcely need to pray "Thy Kingdom come," or "Thy Will be done." We do little honour to God by looking at this world as we know it, and claiming on behalf of some supposed piety, that all that happens is in accordance with His Will. That is not Christianity but pantheism. And so we have been brought round at last to that troublesome question which we hinted at a page or so back ; our sheer duty of look-

ing with open eyes upon life as we actually know it, the perplexing muddle of good and evil, of happiness and tragedy, beauty and ugliness, harmony and discord, and applying to its interpretation the touchstone of the good and perfect and acceptable Will; inquiring humbly but bravely to what extent we can find in it an exhibition of that Will, and in what directions we can help in the accomplishment.

I am venturing to suggest four such directions: (i) sin; (ii) the hardship involved in the achievement of a greater good; (iii) ignorance; and (iv) what we call "accidents." And alas! the further we go, the more difficult the journey will become. Only by clinging to the thought of the Father, and the perfect Will, can we hope to emerge at last.

(i) The first and simplest factor which we can see thwarting the Father's will is the existence of sin, when man deliberately opposes his own will to God's, instead of bringing it into obedience. The tragedy which for some time wrecked the life of the prodigal son was not his father's will for him; it was incurred directly by his disobedience. The father risked the possibility of that when he let him go, as God risked the possibility of the world's sin when he gave man a limited, but real freedom. We must believe in all reverence that in both cases the end was worth the risk. Not by any means all, but a large part of the evil in the world is due to sin; harassed consciences, ineffective efforts, depraved souls, broken bodies, enfeebled minds, shattered homes; why prolong the sad list, of which we all have experience? It is not only the suffering of the sinner himself, but

often the suffering which he has brought upon the innocent that we must claim to be in opposition to the Father's Will for His children, and incurred because we have chosen to play prodigal. The first battle to which this prayer commits me is that against all sin and disobedience, first of all in my own soul, and then in the world at large.

(ii) We pass a little deeper to the second factor. Some of the harder things of life we may claim to be the only possible road to a higher good, where God's Will is primarily for the excellent end and only secondarily, if at all, for the hardness by which it is attained. Every parent knows how many good things in later life we will for our own children, which can only be won through to at last at the price of drudgery, discipline, or even pain itself, where the advantage is not obvious to the short perspective of childhood. Here is a simple example : when we take a small child to the dentist, it is because we will the future good ; sound teeth, a good digestion, excellent health. None of us wills the pain of the small operation, although it is inevitable in the given circumstances. The same principle covers a multitude of familiar instances—disciplined study, tedious practice, the heart-ache of the first departure to school, in some cases even punishment.

I think this matter is worth enlarging because it cuts so deep. From 1914 to 1918 England sent great armies of her sons to war, with resultant casualties running into seven figures. What the Motherland willed in those instances was obviously the excellent end of the safety of her family and the honour of

her people which, in the given circumstances, she believed to be impossible of attainment except by that bitter road. But does anybody believe that England willed the death of a single soldier, in any real sense?

And that illustration has carried us deeper than we meant, for in this case it was not always the ultimate good of the sufferer that was willed, but that of the whole family or of other people. We get a simple illustration in the case of a child sent away from home, on account of the illness of her sister which demands the whole of the maternal care.

All this deserves the fullest thought because it helps us to see how often what looks like a cry of submission may really be an acclamation of the perfect Will of a Heavenly Father for some greater goal which we help Him to achieve by bravely treading the hard road. It throws a valuable light on the whole idea of sacrifice, which has suffered from ancient associations suggesting that its value lies in its pain and unpleasantness, whereas it is usually the road which love is asked to tread for attaining a real good for others, as the Son of God trod it from Gethsemane to Calvary, still acclaiming the perfect Will of His Father.

I leave the matter for your own consideration this Lent, with the simple picture of the dentist's chair and the little girl exiled from home as a partial explanation of some of the harder facts of life. Much of what is best in you and me at this moment has been won through to by our less pleasant experiences and often through our humiliating failures. And apart

from our own training, the whole happiness of the world is dependent on the love of those who are prepared to make sacrifices for the good of others. The illustrations also help us to understand that when we are wrestling with such difficulties we are surrounded by the very close sympathy and help of God, if the experience of us parents when our children suffer can be extended to the Heavenly Father. Is not that part of the meaning of Calvary?

(iii) We pass to the third case in which we lift our wills to help attain the perfect Will of God, and that is in the removal of ignorance. "Father, forgive them," said our Lord of the Roman soldiers, who believed themselves to be doing their official duty at His crucifixion, "for they know not what they do." A large amount of the suffering of the world has been due to want of knowledge which could not be accounted blameworthy and cannot be reckoned as sin. Why man has been led through to knowledge by such a long and costly process of trial and error is part of the mystery of Evolution which we faced in the previous chapter. But with all its mystery God has actually used the process to build up in the soul of man a hunger for truth and a patient seeking mind, which are essentially valuable in themselves. After all, we send our own children to school for a long and difficult apprenticeship, and the greatest thing it can do for them is not simply to supply them with knowledge of facts, but to educate in them both character and the finest gift of all scholarship, which is a ceaseless yearning for more knowledge and deeper truth.

Under this third head we must place all the suffering which our race has endured and still endures, through its ignorance of laws, whether physical or moral. It is a vast and black patch upon human history, covering the diseases which man could have avoided had he known the causes of their incidence, the wars which a truer understanding of human relations would have avoided, the pain suffered before the discovery of anæsthetics, the bitter religious persecutions of fanaticism, the warping of child-minds by well-intentioned, but ignorant, handling, and a host of other evils both racial and personal. None of us will hesitate to-day to place God's Will on the side of growing knowledge, and to understand that in this clause of the Prayer we are dedicating our wills to battle against every form of ignorance not only in the nursery and class-room, but in every department of life.

(iv) We are passing imperceptibly to the fourth class of things which are hard to reconcile with a perfect Will, left to the end of the chapter as not only the most difficult, but as the one in which we are least certain of our ground; I mean the tragedies which in ordinary conversation we describe as accidental, which just *happen*; nobody is to blame, ignorance is almost unavoidable, and we cannot easily see any greater good to which they lead. Such disasters are usually the results of what are called the laws of Nature, a regular sequence of cause and effect. The motor-car skids on a greasy road and a fatality ensues; the child picks up a wandering germ and succumbs; the breadwinner

of the family contracts cancer which results in a painful death to himself and an impoverished future for his family ; old age or injury brings mental trouble ; a volcano erupts and buries whole towns ; the *Titanic* meets an iceberg ; the Black Death descends upon Europe in the Middle Ages, or influenza sweeps the world after the Great War. There is no need to prolong the list ; we are all specially sensitive to disasters to-day because they constitute a large section of our newspaper reading and our wireless news, calling us to face the tragedies of the whole earth heaped together instead of the simpler ones of a man's immediate environment, as was formerly the case.

Are they God's Will in *any* sense ? There are few more difficult problems, for nobody finds it easy to reconcile them with a Father's love. Yet the question is forced upon us clergy from time to time ; by the mother, for instance, who faces an empty cradle, and the empty years which lie ahead, and clings desperately as her one poor shred of consolation, to the thought that somehow the tragedy is God's Will, and therefore right. Shall we agree for her sake, or shall we question her belief in an effort to vindicate a Father's love ?

We have said that these happenings are mostly due to "natural law," the harmful working of a uniformity which on its beneficial side is invaluable to mankind as the basis of all our scientific knowledge and the condition of all our creative activity. How could we carry on life in this world if we could not trust the "law of gravity," for instance ? And yet

the falling object is often the immediate cause of some disaster. We must not so interpret that uniformity as to make God a prisoner in His own system ; almost every novel pre-supposes that the dice are in some strange way loaded on the side of mankind, and many of us, from our own experience, are convinced that a Providential direction can act through the laws themselves, even if that direction follows spiritual laws of its own, as is suggested on a later page. Nor is the scientific world so certain to-day as it was in the nineteenth century that the uniformity is rigid ; the whole conception of natural law is at present undergoing a very searching examination at a level far beyond our scope.

Yet on the practical plane of our ordinary experience it seems evident that God has placed mankind in a world of regular sequences, which are essential for our lives, but which involve grave risks of danger and disaster. We can go further than that, and urge that the very presence of physical risk in the world has been used for the developing of many virtues in the human soul which it is difficult to imagine being produced without it. Courage, patience, endurance, enterprise and even the tenderer side of love are all dependent on that possibility of disaster. Those who feel that the price of the education is too high must believe, as we have previously said, that something has gone wrong far back at the commencement of the world's development, to account for the tragedy of the setting. But even so we could claim that God's Will now is for man to confront this perpetual risk, and to develop those wonderful qualities which can

be won through it. And that seems as far as we can go ; for the moment we leave the general problem of the danger of the world, and come down to the actual detail of a particular disaster, we have the teaching and example of our Lord on the other side, Who refused to attribute illness or the falling tower to the direct Will of God, and said of the dying sparrow, not that it was God's Will, but that it did not happen without the Father's knowledge.

We have also the testimony of human effort on that other side. For whenever man has been content to ascribe the disastrous operation of natural law directly to the Will of God, he has sat down under it with Eastern fatalism, or filled his churches while the cholera raged unabated in the streets ; whereas the energy and common sense of Western nations have accepted the disaster as a challenge, claimed God's Will on the side of the fighter rather than on the side of the tragedy, sat patiently at the feet of Nature to learn its laws and comply with them, and have usually ended with the conquest or mitigation of the evil. An energetic attack on one branch of the problem has reduced infantile mortality considerably in the last two generations, and we can scarcely urge that God's Will about children has changed in equal ratio in the same period. We owe most of the discoveries of recent days, from chloroform to the great liner or the latest and safest aeroplane, to the men who believed that God's Will was the confronting of danger for conquest rather than submission, and we must therefore interpret this clause as a summons to join their ranks, rather than to bow our heads in

submission to what were once called "Acts of God."

To sum up : while we can see God's Will in the beneficent operation of Nature and can believe His purpose to be that we should wrestle with the more tragic side, we cannot read His direct Will in any particular disaster which our efforts have failed to avert. The nearest illustration which I can suggest from ordinary life is when a father provides a motor bicycle for his son to ride to his work. He wills its usefulness ; he even wills the risk, rather than that the son should grow up timid ; he also wills that the lad should learn as much about its mechanism and control as possible for his own safety. But he certainly does not will any accident which may subsequently occur. This is not completely satisfying, but our little minds stand baffled before any problem of evil.

It is probably not satisfying to the victim of the disaster ; the mother by the empty cradle wants a Gospel rather than a philosophy. We can tell her that by God's help she can make even of the tragedy a road to a greater nobility of soul, as she bears her share of the world's sorrow ; we can point her for inspiration to the Cross of Jesus Who shared in the suffering of life and won through it to our redemption. We can assure her of the very real sympathy and love of the Heavenly Father in her sorrow. For Christ Who told us that the sparrow does not fall dead upon the ground without the Father, added, " Fear not ; ye are of more value than many sparrows." Our one sure hope is that our Commander is with us in the battle, even when we are wounded, and

can make of the waters of the Red Sea, a pathway to the promised land.

And so we conclude a difficult discussion with an admission of the final mystery, but an assurance that in all cases "Thy Will be done" is an acclamation of a perfect and acceptable Will. The words ought to be inscribed on the banners of those who labour in the workroom to make flying safer or of those who are staving off an epidemic by providing a new sewage system for a village. They are the motto of all who fight against ignorance, searching patiently in the laboratory for the cause of cancer or studying the life story of some germ which destroys the crops. They are the inspiration of those who tread with love a sacrificial road for the ultimate good of others, as well as of those who are fighting against sin, in their own souls or in the world at large. For "The Battle is the Lord's," and the Father is with His children in the struggle.

CHAPTER VI

THE SON'S BODILY NEEDS

Give us this day our daily bread

THE consciousness of sonship has evolved into worship, from worship to approval of the Father's purpose, and from approval to joyous and willing obedience. So far it has been concerned with the Father ; it passes on now to the expression of its own needs. Petition is certainly not the whole of prayer, it is not even the highest form of it ; but it is as natural and beautiful as the requests which the children make to us parents in such trusting confidence that we want them happy. The Bible abounds in injunctions to us to offer up our petitions. "In everything," says St. Paul, "by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." And Christ has left us His own example in the great prayer for His disciples in the thirteenth chapter of St. John, and His statement to St. Peter—"I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."

Of course the first thing that strikes us about these requests is their position ; they have been postponed to the middle of the prayer. There is a two-fold significance in this fact. In the first place it warns us that in our devotions we are to think

about God first, just as an unselfish child will concern himself with his mother's needs and affairs before urging his own requests. This is a great lesson, for it is no more easy to exclude self-centredness from our religion than it is from our ordinary life, and it is one of the greatest achievements when our prayers can help to lift us to God, and wean us from that egotism which can be so devastating not only to the happiness of others, but to that of the egotist himself. Many of us value prayer and worship as a road from this self-tyranny. I imagine that the greatest saints find their devotions gravitating more and more to the first half of the Lord's Prayer.

But there is a second significance in the position of these petitions in that they are made by a son who has already spoken the earlier clauses, and are therefore governed by the latter. He has said "*Our Father*," and thereby linked himself with the whole human family; his requests are made with a full consciousness of that family, whose needs, with his own, he is remembering before God. It is a striking fact that most of the instances of our Lord's petitions which have been recorded deal with the needs of others. And most of us find that as we advance further in life, sending our interests out from our own personal centre, enlarging our personality till it embraces an ever-widening circle, from home to school, and from school to parish or office, and from parish to nation and out at last to the welfare of mankind at large, so our petition becomes merged more and more in intercession, that is the bearing up of the needs of other members of His family before

the great Father of us all. Even our own most personal wants will be governed by that word "our," which cuts out at once all mere selfish ends which could only be purchased at the expense of our brethren. A profiteer who wanted a shortage of commodities in order to send up his receipts, could scarcely bring such a request before Our Father. We are asking for requisites for all God's children; a fact which involves some heart-searching questions about our social life.

The petitions are also governed by the clause "Thy Kingdom come"; they are uttered by a son who has approved the Father's purpose for mankind. Nothing that retards the coming of that Kingdom can find a place here in the son's prayers. If Alexander wanted more worlds to conquer, he could hardly have said so to the Father Who was working out His great purpose.

And in the last place, the requests are subject to the third clause, "Thy Will be done." These words will not make us hesitate to ask quite easily and happily, when we remember that it is the good and acceptable and perfect Will of a Loving Father that we have acclaimed. If their assurance of our good will brings our own children running to us with their requests, confident of our desire for their happiness, we shall not dare to plead less for the Father in Heaven (always remembering the complications faced in the last chapter), than that He wills for us a life in this world of happy, serene and confident sonship. And such a life is impossible without the right physical and spiritual conditions; our daily

bread and our forgiven sins ; or as the Catechism so beautifully puts it : “ I pray under God that He will send us all things that be needful both for our souls and bodies.”

It will be noticed that the Catechism reverses the order of the clauses in the Prayer, and puts the spiritual needs first. This may be for the sake of the beautiful rhythm, but I rather suspect that it was due to a feeling that the needs of the spirit should stand first. They do, of course, in eternal significance, but not in order of time. The baby must be fed and its body tended for several years before you can teach it the first lessons about God ; those who minister at the altar or lectern will cease to minister if they forget their physical wants. “ Man shall not live by bread alone,” but he cannot live long in this world without it. And I like to believe that the order of these clauses in the prayer was intentional ; that it is one of those instances of the wonderful human understanding and sheer common sense—that perfectly inestimable gift of God—which our Lord always displayed. He puts first in order what comes first in time, just as, whether intentionally or not, He represented the prodigal son as driven by his hunger to take the first step of the homeward journey ; “ How many servants of my Father have food and to spare, and I perish with hunger.” I have heard many an excellent sermon at a Harvest Festival just fail in its effect because the preacher felt it his duty to slip away from the physical to the spiritual after a slight reference to the former, and to interpret our bread in a heavenly and spiritual manner, when

we were really all assembled for the express purpose of thanking God for His bountiful provision for our bodily needs. I have lingered over this because I feel that the physical is more important than we sometimes allow, and that the precedence in time given to it by our Lord is a direct inspiration to all who are labouring for the improvement of physical conditions, being persuaded that those who are oppressed by sheer material want are not likely to be very responsive to higher calls, and that many of our moral and even spiritual difficulties arise from wretched homes and other unsatisfactory conditions.

That last consideration has led us on from the position of this petition to its actual significance, which is the right physical condition necessary for sonship at its best. We believe that this is God's Will for His children, partly on the analogy of the earthly parent who longs for fulness of life for his children; he wants them happy, healthy, active, adventurous, unharassed and self-respecting. I think we can also assume it on the ground of the extraordinary provision which the Creator has made for us. When we doubt about the care of God for our ordinary human wants it is worth while to look round upon the wonderful wealth of material for our needs which the world produces, much of which has been waiting for our discovery since the creation. It is that very wealth of production which is accused of causing some of our modern economic problems, though I imagine the real trouble is our inability to find methods of distributing it to meet the needs of the whole family.

The petition for the supply of these physical needs has been put into beautifully simple form—"our daily bread." Remembering that it is a request for the right material conditions for sonship at its best, we can find in those simple words the three essentials of those conditions, that is: (i) that the supply should be adequate; (ii) that it should be linked with labour; and (iii) that it should be free from anxiety.

(i) Let us take them in order. Serene sonship depends upon the material supply being adequate. We ask for enough in that word *bread*; but when we inquire what "enough" means, we are faced with some difficult questions. Everyone knows that a condition of miserable want and wretchedness spoils happy sonship; we have quoted some instances of that above. Bread does not mean a crust which leaves us still hungering. But it is probably as true at the other end that sonship is spoiled by luxury as well as by want. We are not praying for a surfeit of iced cake. That childish thought is worth stating; many of us have met men who were once happy, self-reliant workers, and reasonably free from care, who through the advent of prosperity have settled down into ineffective idlers, whose happiness is destroyed by cares about their possessions or by worries about their health. We can all see that sonship requires a middle course, which is as far away from pampered pets on the one side as it is from starved slaves on the other. But where we shall draw the line and say with confidence: "This is the best possible physical setting for sonship at

its highest"; that is a matter on which few of us would care to dogmatise. For it is so obviously relative; relative to our early training and upbringing, relative to our particular circle in life, relative most of all to the age in which we live; the luxuries of one generation so easily pass into the necessities of the next.

We remember that when the words were first spoken it was among a population whose conception of the necessities of existence bore no sort of relation to our own. They were a people whose work was mainly manual, whose homes were extremely simple, whose beds were rugs which could be rolled up and carried under the arm, whose meals were very frugal—the corn of the fields, the fruit from the trees, the fish from the lake. We contrast it somewhat uneasily with our own complicated existence, our exacting standard of what makes for a full life, and the wealth of possessions which has become almost normal in our industrial age. And again we wonder where the line should be drawn so as to make for the finest sonship; for very few of us would seriously contemplate the sacrifice of all that applied science has done for the comfort and convenience of life and return gladly to the Arcadian simplicity of Galilee in the first century.

Each one has to give this matter careful consideration in the light of his own surroundings, for it is one of the urgent calls of Lent that we should examine carefully if the things of the body have passed beyond the point where they make life really full, and have become detrimental in any sense. The present

economic stress may call for a return to something simpler than we have come to regard as the ideal. But the whole question is hedged around with all sorts of considerations that lie outside our competence ; problems of supply and demand and other economic questions relating to international trade, psychological questions involving our parental responsibilities for our children¹ and the effect of competition and ambition as incentives to human activity ; the results of increasing or decreasing the standards of living, not only on the comfort of a population but even on its numbers. All these issues must be laid aside while we content ourselves with a few governing considerations supplied by religion which may be considered little more than truisms.

The first is that our dominating principle is this test of really happy and effective sonship. The standard of comfort which has begun to make us selfish, hamper our activity, spoil our enterprise, weaken our will to work, enfeeble our health or interfere with our faith, has passed beyond the stage that can rightly be described as " Bread."

The second consideration is that above a certain moderate line (where it makes a great difference) the increase of possessions and luxury brings no increase of happiness or fulness of life in anything like the same ratio. I believe that the happiest people are

¹ In him woke
With his first babe's first cry, the noble wish
To save all earnings to the uttermost
And give his child a better bringing up
Than his had been.

Tennyson's *Enoch Arden*.

very much within the limits at both ends. The sheer lust of acquisition is the deceitful perversion of a human instinct and the anxieties of riches are as real as our Lord warned us.

The third consideration is that even when we have allowed for the value of competition and ambition as spurs of activity, the selfish scramble for our own comfort and fulness of life, regardless of the needs of others, and even deeming that the wealth itself is some claim on their respect, stands utterly condemned at the bar of our Lord's life and teaching and the first word of His Prayer, as surely as it is inconsistent with humanity and reason. The public conscience grows more and more sensitive on this matter, and we hope that later generations will look back on our more glaring inequalities with the pitying wonder with which we now regard the anomalies which were tolerated as natural in the past.

(ii) When we have decided for ourselves this question of adequacy, we turn to the second requirement for the right physical condition of sonship, which we have stipulated as work. If you contend that this is not mentioned in the petition I should reply that you could have found it in the word "Bread." For the connexion between bread and work is age-long and essential. All the amazing bounty of God's supply in the world would be wasted without human labour; the corn would rot in the fields and the fruit wither in the orchard; masses of material would remain not only unused, but even undiscovered. The teeming generosity of

the provision is God's challenge to man to meet His liberality by labour. Behind the loaf on the table stands a long chain of toilers ; it begins with the settler who first cleared the prairie land, and passes on to the man who sold him the seed and the actual sower, through the reapers, Canadian transport workers, the captain and crew of the merchant vessel, the miners who supplied her with coal, the labourers in the docks, the transport workers in England, the people at the banks, the clerks in the offices, the merchants, the miller and the baker, down to the man who delivered it at your door. It is a frightening list, but nobody who has caught a vision of them all will dare to imagine that the petition is a substitute for human labour, or anything else than our offering of human toil to God as our response to His bounty.

Sonship at its best involves our co-operation in the world's work in some form or other ; that, I think, is beyond disputing. It is not only a duty but a blessing. It is this fact that adds the last touch of pathos to the great industrial problem of our time, when millions of men are standing idle in the world's market-place because no man hath hired them. Nothing else can take the place of the wage-earning work in their lives ; we all know that no allowances, whatever the scale, can replace the moral and spiritual values and the happiness that they are losing. And when the position recovers, the more those who have no need to earn their daily bread show by example from above that they regard work in some form, bodily, mental or spiritual, as a universal duty, and a road to happiness rather than a path to be avoided

when circumstances make it possible, the better it will be for the whole world. I am not pretending that labour is always attractive. Another problem of course, which the modern industrial age has raised, is the sheer monotony of toil demanded from so many men in production by machinery compared with the interest and joy of creative craftsmanship. I wish it were possible to provide everybody with a vocation as full and absorbing as my own. I shall never cease to be grateful for having been given work, and work which abounds in human interest. If life started again and the same opportunity were offered me, I think that I should respond again without any hesitation. I wonder much at the reluctance of a younger generation with regard to taking Orders, except in so far as it is dictated by difficulties of faith. I know that my own vocation bears little comparison with the monotony of much factory labour ; but I am still persuaded that even monotonous work is better than to sit through life twiddling one's thumbs while other people get on with the job.

(iii) The third condition relating to our physical life which is essential to serene and happy sonship is freedom from anxiety. All of us would agree that even adequate provision for the moment leaves something to be desired, if the future is full of uncertainty. It has always seemed to me that one of the greatest prizes offered to those who have been born to financial independence or attained it, is the lifting of the load of anxiety about the future for themselves and those they love. I hope that we do

not resent the trend of our modern legislation in lightening this burden for our poorer brethren by making provision for their times of illness, unemployment and declining years ; anxiety on these scores must have sat very heavily on multitudes in the past. We can all admit that the provision must be made with infinite care, so as not to discourage thrift, independence, enterprise and effort. But the removal of the heavy load of worry about the future because it spoils the lives of sons, is one of the greatest things that England has tried to achieve for her children in our generation, however much methods and details require watching.

And Christ recognised absence of anxiety about the future as an essential to sonship when He gave us in this clause the words, "This day" and "Daily." We look with envious admiration on that wonderful Figure moving through the difficulties and joys of His ministry with a serene untroubled mind and perfect trust and confidence in God ; it reminds us how great is the power and influence of those who have reached any measure of the unworried life ; we turn to them as eagerly as the drifting swimmer clutches the boat that is riding at anchor.

For the example and injunction of the Perfect Son seem almost a counsel of perfection to many of us in this present age, with our anxious temperaments or, as it so frequently is, our anxious habit. We listen very uneasily to those mistranslated words from the Sermon on the Mount : "Take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the

things of itself." We notice that not only did Christ insist continually to His disciples that this freedom was essential for their full life as sons, but that the Apostles caught it up after Him: "I would have you to be free from anxiety"; "Casting all your anxieties upon Him, for He is anxious for you"; "In nothing be anxious, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God, and the peace of God shall keep your hearts."

How can we reconcile this great Example and these injunctions with our ordinary life to-day, especially at a time when the nation itself is being called to take very serious thought for the future to a degree unknown since the war? This is one of the questions which simply must be faced if we are to keep religion real, and not a set of ideas which we assume on Sunday and discard with our Sunday clothes as impracticable for the week-day world. There are three considerations which must be stated.

The first is, of course, that the words "Take no thought" are antique. In Elizabethan English they were a phrase which meant what Christ actually said—"Don't be anxious, and worried." The Revised Version restores His actual injunction as "Take no anxious thought for the morrow, for the morrow will be anxious for the things of itself." It is a call to face each day's difficulties as we meet them and not to spoil our work to-day by our anxiety about to-morrow. Neither Christ nor His Apostles left us an example of not taking thought. Christ planned out His future steps with care, from the

moment that He chose His twelve disciples and commenced to train them, and St. Paul organised a great collection throughout his churches with a careful eye to the future of the Church at Jerusalem. There is immense difference between taking careful thought for the future, and getting fussed about it.

In the second place we must do justice to the extreme difference of life in those days from the setting of our own existence. We have seen how simple it was, and how comparatively easy to think in terms of the day, when you lived on the product of sea, field and vineyard close at hand, and wants were few. We have replaced that simple civilisation by an elaborate industrial system based on credit and overseas trade, with possibilities of insurance, all of which necessitate thinking in longer terms and living less hand-to-mouth. We can claim that the time unit has ceased to be a literal day, and may rightly be extended in tune with our longer perspective.

And in the third place we must remember that the words were addressed primarily to men who had "left all to follow Him." They had withdrawn their hearts from the cares of the world and seem to have been free from that burden of responsibility for the needs of others which weighs either upon a modern parent or a modern state. It may be that the words in their completeness only apply to those who can claim that they are following fully in the path of sonship trodden by the Leader.

But when we have taken every care in the application from one generation to a different age and from a set of chosen disciples to a world at large, the

summons still remains a very real one. The deeper our sense of sonship becomes, the more we ought to be flinging our anxieties about the future on the shoulders of the Father Who offers to bear them, as readily as a boy at school gets on with his lessons and leaves the bills and other matters to the father who has sent him there. It is one of the great privileges of trusting sonship. We are to think, plan and work, but not to worry, leaving future issues in the hands of God.

All of us understand the wisdom of this. It is a commonplace that most of the things which we fear never come to pass, and that if they do, we have spoiled to-day by the worry and made ourselves less competent to grapple with the trouble to-morrow. But it is far easier to know it theoretically than to carry it into practice. Here is one of the matters where the imperfect sons of our day have most need to sit and learn at the feet of the Perfect Son, for it is a hard lesson indeed, but the gain of it would, as we know, be beyond price.

NOTE TO CHAPTER VI

CONCERNING ANSWER TO PRAYER

AS soon as prayer takes the leap indicated in this clause and passes from adoration and devotion to petition, it raises the whole question which troubles many people at the present day as to how God answers prayer ; whether, that is, we dare conceive of Him as altering His perfect Will in response to our requests, and still more, whether He breaks, suspends or alters the " laws of Nature " to do so.

Whenever this problem is raised I recall a gathering on the top of the Hill at Harrow on a Saturday night some years ago, at which several dozens of us used to meet for discussions. We were a mixed crowd, consisting of doctors, clergy, schoolmasters and professional people generally, and we had argued the question of the efficacy of prayer inside out. We had talked of the laws of Nature and their immutability or otherwise, and of the psychological effect upon ourselves of formulating our needs carefully before God and setting forth to achieve them with a sense of His approval and co-operation. At the conclusion of the discussion a simple brother said : " This is largely beyond me, and I admit that I cannot explain ; but when next I am confronted with some great emergency such as the serious illness of wife or child, I shall kneel

and pray with an earnestness which I don't often achieve, as though driven by some instinct." There arose a low murmur of general approval, and we all felt that the last word had probably been said.

As to God's alteration of His real purpose, that I think we must disclaim on all grounds. But as a parent I can quite imagine waiting before bestowing a gift until the sense of the need of it had developed sufficiently to cause the child to formulate the request. A perfect Will can quite easily be thought of as deferring the fulfilment of its purpose, as certainly as the father of the prodigal son allowed him to go hungry until he had sufficiently come to himself to return home and ask.

But the crux of the matter remains in the second question, with which we have neither time nor competence to deal. It is forced on man more and more by the triumphal success with which science brings more instances of the unknown under the category of the known. Few of us would venture to pray, even with the best possible intentions, for a rose-bush to bear tulips or for an old person to grow a third set of teeth or to live to the age of one hundred and fifty. I can imagine an increasing difficulty about praying for special weather, as the sequences of that very variable element become better understood.

We bear in mind all that has been urged in earlier pages as to the debt which knowledge and free activity and character owe to that regularity of succession, but we may still be allowed to urge at least the following considerations :

1. As has been previously said, the latest scientific theory seems anxious to drop the nineteenth-century idea of a cast-iron rigidity, and to allow room for free action not only on the part of man's will, but also on that of the Creator. The whole conception of physical law seems, in fact, to be in the melting-pot. "Don't drop the idea of miracle," said Sir Oliver Lodge to a gathering of London clergy three years ago, "just when the scientific world is preparing to concede it."

2. Even should the most rigid uniformity and the most universal reign of "law" ever be proved, it would still leave room for miracle in the sense of the operation of a higher law from the spiritual plane acting on the physical plane in a way which is outside our usual experience on that plane itself. We are all accustomed to this sort of operation on the various levels at which knowledge works. On the ordinary mechanical plane known to the savage, a piece of iron is a piece of iron, and you can do certain elementary things with it. But take it to the chemist and in his laboratory he will combine it with sulphur and oxygen and produce for you the green crystals of iron-sulphate which might well seem miraculous to the savage. Pass up to the region of physiology, where the laws of life operate, and you will learn how that iron enters into the circulation of the blood in a manner which is impossible for the chemist to reproduce in inorganic chemistry, but which he knows is no contradiction of law. And higher still, the consciousness of the human mind coming into play, with its own laws, can fashion from that iron

a steamer or a piece of electrical apparatus which would be the sheerest of miracles if we found it happening in Nature apart from the contriving of the conscious mind.

It is only one step up to the spiritual plane, where we can believe that law may still be at work, and able, in certain circumstances, to come in from above and produce what would be inexplicable miracle if we were confined to the plane of human consciousness. This I suppose is what is claimed by Spiritual Healing, although we may feel that its experience is too tentative to be quoted as very solid evidence. But the contention is unanswerable if we believe in a spiritual world at all, and our petitions would then become our co-operation with God Who acts from above on that spiritual plane, in very much the same way as He has demanded our co-operation in the lower planes of action for the accomplishment of His purpose.

CHAPTER VII

THE SON'S SPIRITUAL NEEDS

*Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that
trespass against us*

WE are concerned with the son's petitions to the Father Whose Will for our welfare is perfect, and can therefore be supposed to intend those physical and spiritual conditions of life which make possible sonship at its best. Following the order of the Prayer, we put the physical conditions first, because they come first in time, not first in spiritual significance. "Man shall not live by bread alone"; that is a proof of our birthright. If trouble concerning things of the body can spoil a son's happiness, it is our glory that a harassed soul can do it also. If we were perfectly content when every bodily need was satisfied it would be a poor look-out for man; he might easily believe himself to be an evolved animal, and nothing more. The prodigal son may have arisen in the pigsty driven first by the pangs of hunger, but he came to himself, and when he met his father his first cry was not for a meal, but "I have sinned." The pigs he left behind would have been perfectly contented with food.

That is why religion has been justified in making much of the consciousness of sin, that claim of

divine sonship which recognises that we were born for higher things than the animal world. The Bible is full of it, from the allegory of the Fall in the first chapter of Genesis down to the last chapter of Revelation, with its warning to wash our robes. The sense of wrong-doing is expressed in many different metaphors ; sometimes it is called missing the mark, our failure to attain the standard which the soul possesses ; at other times it is trespass or disobedience, the deliberate wandering into forbidden fields or the breaking of a rule. Elsewhere it becomes debt ; we have borrowed something which we cannot repay ; at other times it is filthiness, which gives point to that wonderful cry of the Psalmist—Thou shalt wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Whatever the metaphor, it always suggests a spoiled relation which leaves us uncomfortable before someone with the right to judge us ; just as a dirty face shames us before one whom we respect, or a debt disturbs our peace of mind in the presence of the creditor.

All through history runs that cry of the prodigal expressed in various phrases and in ceremonial action. It lies behind many of the rites of heathenism, just as it is implicit in our modern uneasiness about social conditions. We find it inspiring great literature, such as Augustine's *Confessions*, or Bunyan's *Grace Abounding* with its almost morbid worry about trivial offences. We see the Cross of Christ dominating the Christian world for nineteen centuries, just because it offers man a way of deliverance. That sense of spoiled sonship has been one of the greatest factors in human life, and if we are faced to-day, as

many claim, with a distinct weakening of that consciousness of sin, we have every right to be concerned as to whether man's sense of God and His Fatherhood is declining in the same proportion. Better a confession of imperfect sonship than a repudiation of the relation.

Now there is much to support that contention, and we have need to work and pray for a renewal of the vision of God, believing that it would be accompanied by a growing dissatisfaction with all in life which is not worthy of the sons of God. But the position is not quite so discouraging as might appear at first sight, nor so simple. It is true that we talk much less about sin than our fathers did, in preaching, prayers and hymns. But though this may be partly accounted for by less sensitive consciences, there are other factors at work in the modern world which are far more excellent, and sometimes distinctly in line with the teaching of our Lord.

The first is that the human conscience shifts its accent from age to age as to the class of sin that matters most. While it is less acute on personal matters, in many respects it seems more sensitive on social sins, and is unhappy about responsibilities which sometimes sat very lightly on what we regard as more penitent ages. In a similar way the nineteenth century was almost obsessed with concern about offences against the seventh commandment, and there has been a violent reaction against that position ; in a humanitarian age it is probably sins of unkindness that are accounted worst. Of course the pendulum has swung too far, much too far ; but when I read

that the stern father of a past generation who turned an erring daughter out of doors was a greater sinner than she, I must confess to some sympathy. There is little in the teaching of our Lord to suggest that sins of the flesh are practically the only ones that matter.

But a greater change is due to our knowledge that dwelling overmuch upon sins is a dangerous proceeding, and very likely to suggest them. Psychology has taught that lesson to every school teacher and parent, and told us that the healthiest way to promote sonship is to hold up the ideal of it clear before the young mind, rather than to harp continually upon the ways in which it may be broken. To study the character of Christ is better than to dilate on the seven deadly sins. We are all anxious to be positive rather than negative ; to think about "the things that are lovely" rather than the ugly, and to replace *Don't* by *Do* as far as is practicable in all education. And there again we have the whole of Christ's practice and teaching to support us. In the Sermon on the Mount He replaced the *Don'ts* of the Ten Commandments with the Law of Love, and the positive injunctions of the Beatitudes. It was a great step forward for the human race ; we do it as soon as is possible in the nursery, and its results are usually excellent.

There is a third direction in which our modern outlook can claim that it is approaching the Example of Christ, and that is in its practical concern about getting things right, rather than a judicial weighing of blame and apportioning of penalty ; in looking

forward more than backward, and being keener about restoration than punishment, which it regards when possible, as curative. This is so great an issue that it requires deeper consideration.

I think we must begin by drawing a very careful distinction between the consequences of sin and the punishment of sin, for we often confuse the two. The consequences of sin are many and obviously evil. They had reduced the prodigal son to beggary and want, just as they can do to-day. But the depraved face of the sensualist and the wrecked body of the drunkard are only external signs; the consequences penetrate into the mind, and the law of habit comes into play, so that inevitably the next step downward becomes easier, unless some intervening power comes into action. (Unfortunately the natural results do not stop at the sinner; we are so interwoven in the fabric of life, for good, remember, as well as for evil, that the sinner's children or friends or victims may appear to suffer more than he. The amount of evil in the world which is a direct result of other people's sins, we have already admitted to be enormous). But among all these consequences one of the most important is the interference with sonship. It starts with shame, but unless repentance intervene, the hardening of the soul may lead on to neglect or even repudiation. Every man who hesitates to lend money to another because bitter experience has taught him that he may lose a friend through it, will understand that trend towards a broken relation.

Now all this is consequence, following, by a sort of law, on sinful action, but we usually keep the word

punishment to indicate something else.¹ It means not this inevitable result, but something imposed from above on the sinner, for a definite purpose ; and the purpose has deepened in the course of a long history.

In its first stage, punishment seems to have been mainly vindictive ; it was " getting one's own back," with a dim feeling that " it wasn't fair." We can still see this instinctive action at work in the primitive society of the lower schoolroom. As society became more organised, it took the vendetta out of the hands of the victim, and for the protection of the community imposed a penalty on the victim's behalf. The penalty either removed the criminal from being a further danger, or warned him and others against a similar offence. With the development of law and order, a definite penalty was attached to each transgression, and if any sinner escaped the penalty, the strength of the law was felt to be weakened accordingly.

Now all these ideas are still associated with human punishment, and obviously they cannot be excluded from our modern life. The state is still governed by them to a large extent. But in our ordinary relations they have fallen into the background behind the motive which actuates most of our best punishment to-day, the desire that it shall be reformative. I have spoken of it as modern, but it is set out in most

¹ We sometimes speak of natural consequences as punishment from God, inasmuch as the law by which they follow may be considered as His ordaining ; but that would entail speaking of God as punishing the innocent, so it seems better to preserve strictly the distinction drawn in the text.

explicit terms by Plato as the only really satisfactory conception. Very few of us parents, except when moved by anger or some other primitive instinct, or when the example to the rest of the family might justify it, would punish our children otherwise than with the intention of steering them off future delinquencies. The school has followed the same course in its discipline. Even the State, which is tied down by its duty of preserving the safety of its citizens and maintaining the strength of law, has made strenuous efforts in the last fifty years, not only to escape from vindictiveness, but as far as possible to adjust some of its punishments in such a way as may make for the restoration of the right relation between the criminal and the State.

But the moment punishment becomes mainly curative, forgiveness ceases to be concerned primarily with the remission of punishment, and becomes rather the restoration of the offender to the relation which he has spoiled. I know that a boy accounts himself forgiven if he is let off the whacking; but the higher our conception of the relation, the less is forgiveness concerned with the penalty. The lover who pleads for forgiveness and the unfaithful but penitent wife, are alike asking to be taken back to the old terms. So is the truly repentant criminal who sets his teeth to go through his sentence, determined that on his release he will take up the right relation to his country. The remission of penalty without restoration is a poor conception of forgiveness. I knew a Lower Fourth form master in a certain school who scattered impositions with a lavish hand, but a boy had only

to go up to him afterwards with an ingenuous face and a glib tongue, to get them remitted with the same light-heartedness. The master in the Upper Fourth was unflinching; he imposed few penalties; but if a boy, encouraged by his experience in the form below, tried the same trick on the senior master and asked remission, he was looked at in a way which prevented any repetition of the effort. Yet the boys themselves, in the depths of their ungrateful little hearts, knew that the latter cared for them as the former did not, and that in the formation of their character they owed much to the senior master, and very little to the other.

Now this changed idea as to punishment and forgiveness has probably had a marked effect upon the amount of wrong-doing. The brutalities of our prison system a hundred years ago make dreadful reading; and the proportion of the criminal population in those days was incredible. We parents have moved far away from the traditions of the Fairchild family, and the amount of stupid naughtiness in childhood has considerably decreased. I know that there are other contributing factors in both cases, but not sufficient, I think, to rob us of this conviction.

But whatever may be the effect of the changed view of punishment and forgiveness on the amount of sin, there is one direction where its influence has been unmistakable, and that is on our conception of the attitude of our Heavenly Father. Few would dare to credit Him with vindictive punishment, and some of us are not persuaded that He is bound to uphold His laws by exacting a penalty for each trans-

gression, as the state so often is. This is of immense importance, as it lies at the root of some older theories of the Atonement which cause us most difficulty to-day. If the parental analogy still holds good, we want to claim that the great Father's punishment, as distinct from consequences, is almost entirely reformatory, aiming at producing real repentance and so leading to restoration, and if this be true, eternal punishment becomes almost a contradiction in terms. I know that many mothers fought against the doctrine instinctively, long before it became permissible to question it openly.

When we are told that the weakening of this stern sanction for righteousness leads to a great increase of sin, and is responsible for the carelessness of the present day, I think we can plead the actual facts of history on the other side. Any who have dipped into Coulton's account of the Middle Ages, when eternal torment was practically a universal belief, will have emerged aghast at the black cloud which then hung over the souls of men, and the levity and frivolity with which it was disregarded in conduct. It is not the eternity which makes God's punishment a deterrent, but its certainty, and of that we may well labour to convince the present world.¹

We can sum all this up by saying that for a modern parent the main concern is restoration, which is the only adequate meaning of forgiveness; and that punishment is mainly intended to lead to that end. I

¹ Few of us want to dogmatise on this difficult question, but fewer still find it possible to-day to accept a doctrine of eternal torment. Even in Roman orthodoxy it is hedged around with exceptions which remove much of its sting, though I suspect that they are a modern concession.

take up my gospels and for years I have been persuaded that in these respects we are moving nearer to the sublime teaching of our Lord as to the forgiveness of the Heavenly Father. In the three parables of redemption preserved for us by St. Luke, it is always the restoration that matters; the sheep must be restored to its place in the flock; the coin to its position on the chain; the son to his place in the family circle. It is a marvellous picture of Fatherly love which is not concerned like the Judge to apportion the penalty to the exact guilt of the crime, but yearns for the son's return to sonship. We are not scandalised that the Father forebore any further punishment of the prodigal who has been taught his need for return by the dire consequences of his sin in the far country. I have friends who question on high ethical grounds the treatment of the elder brother. They forget that there were other consequences which the younger suffered; that both sons had received their share of the patrimony, probably a third to the younger and two-thirds to the elder, and the latter presumably had his intact while the other had reduced himself to poverty. There are probably many consequences of sin in this world which even God does not remove; but the one with which Fatherly love can grapple is that broken sonship; and it was that which was restored to a really hungry soul. There is another parable where forgiveness was just as free, and without penalty, when the unmerciful servant was forgiven his huge debt. But he went out and by his callous treatment of a fellow-servant proved himself unworthy of restoration to his former

position ; the free forgiveness was immediately withdrawn and he was sent away to prolonged punishment until he could learn the need and yearning for true restoration.

Forgiveness, then, is always represented as a free act of the Father, eager for restoring the lost son ; but of course there are conditions. The first is the real repentance which is a positive hunger for regaining the unbroken sonship which our sin has spoiled. This is the only meaning of the word in the New Testament ; it is that changed heart and mind which loathes the pigsty and yearns for home. Not only the best punishment, but the whole penitential system of the Church aims at producing this deep repentance.

The second condition is stated both in this Prayer and in the parable just quoted. We must be prepared to extend to other sons that free forgiveness which we have asked of the Father ; otherwise we have proved ourselves unworthy of the happy sonship which we seek.

We do pray for mercy ;
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
The deeds of mercy.

The third condition is not stated in the Prayer, but all Christian theology has agreed that we owe that free forgiveness to the redeeming work of our Lord. In every parable the burden of restoring is borne partly or entirely by the owner, whether it be father, shepherd or bejewelled woman ; our whole hope of forgiveness starts from the seeking Love of God, which was manifested in its fulness at Calvary,

shrinking from no suffering in its effort to bring back the lost sons. I doubt if love can ever wrestle with evil without suffering, or redeem the fallen without entering into the struggle with them. The doctrine of the Atonement has taken different forms in different ages, largely dependent upon the prevailing view of punishment. All we need urge here is that the fact stands, and that our doctrine of it must be consistent with our highest conception of forgiveness and must do full justice to our Lord's revelation of the Fatherly Love of God.

One question remains. What causes sin? How comes it that the sons of God can want to disobey and wander from their Father? Old Greek thought put it down mainly to ignorance; there is a tendency at present to lay the blame largely on environment. Doubtless much moral evil in the world springs from these two causes. It has recently been pointed out that the sheep is represented as straying presumably through its stupidity, while the lost coin lay hid in its surroundings until the dirt was swept away. But it requires a tremendous optimism to imagine that either the most complete education or the most thorough-going social reform would abolish all sin. There would remain that great mass of evil which is represented by the deliberate choice of the prodigal son, the perverted will which can follow the worse even when it approves the better.

If we press deeper and ask the reason of this perversion of will, we come up once more against the inevitable problem of evil. It is a matter of general experience that we are born into this world with a

tendency to go wrong, as is stated by the doctrine of original sin. But when we ask how that tendency first originated, we have already seen that the old theory of Adam's sin in the garden of Eden is difficult to reconcile with our present knowledge.

The teaching of evolution is that we are all born into this world with a certain number of instincts and urges which we have inherited from our long ancestry. They are all essential either for preserving the individual life or perpetuating the race. They are the crude material out of which even the most saintly character is formed, when they are kept in discipline and harmony under God's Will. But when self-seeking allows anarchy, distortion and exaggeration among them, then sin appears. Sin would then be due either to the self-seeking of that lower nature which we have inherited from the animal world, or to a perversion of it, if some great fall has occurred at the commencement of the history of the race. In either case the root of sin is selfishness ; it is the negation of love to God and love to our fellows. That is why the Bible insists so strongly that Love is the only remedy. Christ taught us that all the Ten Commandments are summed up in the love of God and our neighbour, and St. Paul added that love is the fulfilling of the law. So once more we return to the Fatherly love behind God's forgiveness as our only hope, and that love acting through us as the one cure. And once more the Cross of Christ appears as Love's answer to man's sin, and His resurrection as a pledge of its conquest.

We ought perhaps to keep the word sin for the

sheer deliberate disobedience of a man who knows that he is choosing wrongly. We hear much to-day of moral evil which is not sin in this strict sense, since it is due to something wrong either in the body or mind. We are all patient with the fretfulness of a sick child, and know that the cure for petulant naughtiness may sometimes be a pill rather than a punishment. And the close connexion between body and soul carries us further than that; for we read of cases of sleepy sickness which leave behind a distortion of the moral character, and the medical world is convinced that there are other instances where wrong-doing is hardly responsible because of some physical trouble which lies behind it.

Psychology has also stepped in during recent years and has suggested that things can go wrong in the inner and secret recesses of the human mind so as to account for childish naughtiness and even graver offences in later life, though the offender may be unconscious of the trouble and to that extent free from blame.

We will not grudge either to doctor or psychologist any cases of moral evil which by the careful and tested research of competent students they can bring within their scope and seek to cure by their own methods. Rather we will thank God for the lightening, to this extent, of the problem of the world's sin. But the tendency with new discoveries is always to press them far beyond their range, and to treat as universal what is really morbid or abnormal. When we have excluded all the cases of moral evil for which the offender is not really accountable, there will

remain enough sin in its strictest sense of deliberate wrong-doing to demand all our efforts and to call for the greatest forgiving love of God.

Woven into all our life and institutions, our thoughts and our language, is that clear intuition of our own responsibility and of our freedom of choice, however carefully we limit it. And we know sin in ourselves as a deliberate refusal of the obedience of sons, which demands an awakening of our desire for restoration before we can even start on the road back.

And so we conclude the chapter where we began, with an insistence on the importance of our sense of sin and its spoiled sonship; the opportunity given us by Lent to deal with ourselves frankly and fearlessly and to seek forgiveness. It is not only for the great and outstanding sins of the Ten Commandments that we have to examine our lives. The character of the Perfect Son reveals our omissions, our motives, our pride and selfishness and the poverty of our love. And the road back is the old path of repentance in its true sense of a heart and will changed into conformity with the Father's Will; and the remedy is still the Father's love which awaits the prodigal at the end of the journey, even though we are accustomed in sermons and prayers to use more technical terms for that forgiving Love.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SON'S FUTURE

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil

WE have come now to the last petition of the son to the Perfect Father, and like all the rest, it slips into its place in logical order, being a request for future protection. Present needs have been satisfied by the provision of the right physical and spiritual conditions for sonship; it only remains to ask that nothing in the future shall be allowed to mar that relation as the former sin had done, but that he may remain a faithful and obedient son to the end.

A dear old lady of over eighty confessed to me that this clause had troubled her all her life; it is not without its difficulties, as many friends, both clerical and lay, have admitted. It is comforting to know that they were not unknown in the third century; which accounts for some very ancient variations of the actual words.

But we can leave the difficulties for a moment while we take our last look at the prodigal son. It is the evening of the great day. The first exaltation of the marvellous return is just beginning to calm down; the son walks humbly at the father's side through the garden in the last light of the evening. There is a depth of quiet and profound content in

the heart of the wanderer. He has been well fed for the first time for months ("Give us this day our daily bread") and he has been taken back into complete and happy sonship, with the barrier which he had erected between himself and the father broken down ("Forgive us our trespasses"). But he is humbler now than when he first set out in youthful pride upon his great adventure to see the world. As he holds tight to the father's hand there is just one great yearning left in his heart—that nothing shall be allowed to happen in the future which shall again imperil the old relation. If possible, he would like to be kept close at the father's side, but should that be impossible, and for any reason it becomes necessary for him to sojourn forth again, let it be with the father's presence, or surrounded by the father's love and good-will, that by any means he may be preserved from a second failure. And that surely is what is meant by this last petition—"Bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

One difficulty probably lies in the exact shade of meaning which we get into the word "temptation." Originally it meant a testing of the soul, and from that it developed into a definite solicitation to evil which is the greatest test the soul of man has to face. In its early sense it has parallels in various departments of life. If you want to test the strength and agility of a boy's body you let him submit to some difficult athletic feat and see how he gets through it. If we want to test our minds, we go in for an examination, or face some stiff problem demanding intellectual effort. Similarly courage can only be tested by

bringing us up against physical danger ; you cannot know whether you have it by just sitting and thinking about risks in an armchair. Now all these things involve difficulty—there is no testing without that—and with all their risk of failure they serve two other purposes ; for they actually help to develop the quality which they test, and they supply us with practical knowledge of the difficulty which enables us to help others.

Take the first purpose. The small child, unless abnormally delicate, grows stronger and hardier by facing the vagaries of our English climate, with all their risk of giving him a cold, rather than by being coddled in a nursery kept at standard temperature. The girl at the piano makes no headway if she always plays over the pieces she knows quite well ; it is by attempting (almost the same word) harder and harder exercises, with the risk of blunders, that she makes real progress. The lad passes on from one examination to another, with ever-increasing difficulty, from the school certificate to his degree, with risk of failure at every one of them ; but the risk itself is bracing enough to spur him onward with his studies. Courage grows by facing dangers. And the same law holds good of the testing of our souls in every direction ; there is something gained by the possibility of failure that justifies the risk. The prodigal son went out and met the dangers ; they proved too strong for him and he fell ; but one sometimes feels that a trip to that far country would have been useful for his elder brother, provided, of course, he had strength enough to go through it and return unfallen.

There is a pretty story of W. J. Locke's called *Stella Maris* which tells of a delicate girl who was not expected to grow up, and her parents decided that the short life should be a very happy one, saved from all knowledge or experience of the sin and tragedy and ugliness of the world. She was brought up in a lovely house and garden, surrounded by beauty and the tender love of parents and servants. She was allowed to read no book which contained any hint of evil. And unexpectedly she grew stronger, and one day stole out from the garden into the street, where she made her first encounter with the evil of the world. It came near to unbalancing her reason; the atmosphere in which she had been brought up had been too sheltered from risk to allow her to develop character and moral strength. It is just because of this bracing and strengthening effect that St. James says: "Count it all joy when ye fall into manifold temptations, knowing that the trial of your faith worketh patience; and let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing." "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he hath been tried he shall receive the crown of life."

The second result of this testing is a knowledge of the difficulties which should fill us with sympathy and enable us to help others who confront them. That is another reason why I could wish that the elder brother had accompanied the younger, and known something of the tests which he had faced; he would have been less priggish and more human in his attitude to the wanderer. The man who is faced

with spiritual or moral difficulties, or who is passing through a period of bleak religious doubt, is most likely to gain help from one who has himself sounded the depths, and emerged triumphant.

Not only can we plead that temptation provides a road to these two excellent results, but we can urge that it is almost impossible in this world to escape it, unless we shut ourselves up in a very artificial atmosphere as debilitating as that in Locke's story, and even then we are not safe. After all, the elder brother had not escaped temptation, even in his father's fields, any more than the monk does in his cell or than I should do if I spent the whole week in church. We only shift the nature of the temptation from one form to another.

It is therefore a great joy to us to know, as we turn for the last time to that Perfect Life which so beautifully illustrates the perfect prayer, that our Lord Himself faced temptation, just as we are all called upon to do. "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." "The devil departed from Him for a season." "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations." And we all believe to-day that those temptations were real, and not artificially staged. We are even told that "He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." Of course the hardest things He had to face were not always the precise things which would prove most attractive to you and me; you don't tempt a man with the jam which might prove a severe testing to a schoolboy, nor the aged saint with the sort of temptation which

assails the man who cannot pass a public-house. But they were all real, and the hardest were those which were addressed to that upon which His heart was set—His mission to establish the Kingdom. They came on Him in full force in the wilderness with suggestions of going a cheap and easy way to accomplish His purpose; they followed Him to the Lake of Galilee when the people wanted to make Him an earthly King; they continued to the end when He hung upon the cross and the priests offered to believe in Him if He would come down. And He won through to that second great gift of all testing, the power of sympathising with others who go through it. "In that He suffered, being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted."

So far we have seen temptation, in its broadest sense, as practically inevitable, difficult, containing grave risks of failure, but offering strength and the gift of sympathy to the man who endures. One of the questions which have vexed men's minds as they read the clause in the prayer was, Does God send it? And the answer has varied largely according to whether they were thinking mainly of the dangers or the advantages.

Given our human nature such as we know it, with all its instinctive urges inherited from an ancient past, and with that inborn tendency towards self-seeking, it would appear that temptation is an inevitable interaction between that human nature and the outside world. Whenever circumstances make some appeal to the less worthy elements of our personality, we are tempted as surely as is the small boy confronted with a

large box of chocolates. Upon his response to such circumstances depends the building of his character.

Those who are persuaded that some principle of evil has spoiled the original plan will regard that principle as being at the root of the temptation. Others will be content to regard temptation as simply involved in the very constitution of the world and life as we know them. In either case the situation is very similar to the difficulty which we faced with regard to physical disasters. We hesitated to ascribe to God's Will any particular tragedy which occurred through the operation of natural law, and yet felt that by allowing us to confront the risks and dangers of the physical world God has actually used that setting to develop many virtues in the soul which seem to be dependent on it. In a similar way, we can see that the setting of our life involves grave spiritual risks and dangers which, whether provided by God or springing from some other source, God does in fact over-rule to build in us a strength of character which seems dependent upon the presence of that risk. We can therefore believe that God's Will for us is to confront not only physical danger, but even a world in which temptation is now inevitable, with all its risk of spiritual disaster, without feeling that we can regard any specific temptation as being sent by Him. In much the same way many of us parents send our children to school or out into the world, knowing that a self-reliant character is more likely to be produced when facing the risks than if we kept them guarded and sheltered in the home. But no decent father would deliberately solicit his son to

evil, or place a shilling about to tempt him to steal it. It is therefore more accurate to speak of God suffering us to be tempted than actually tempting us. St. James is emphatic on this point. "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God, for God tempteth no man." And St. Paul says, "God will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able." The statement that "Jesus was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil," is an effort to state that position carefully in old terms. The same feeling led to an early Latin variation of the Prayer which reads—"Suffer us not to be led into temptation."

But the father who sends his boy out to school or into the great world outside, does his best by providing high ideals and by warning of the risk, to secure that the lad may come through the dangers unscathed, and St. Paul finishes his text by stating that not only will God not allow us to be tempted above that we are able, "but will with the temptation, also make a way of escape, that we may be able to bear it." A way of escape through the inevitable risk; is not that precisely what we want, and exactly what we can see the prodigal son asking for? It is the idea conveyed in another ancient variation of the prayer—"Lead us not into temptations which we are not able to bear." What troubled those old writers and our modern friends is the dilemma as to whether, if temptation in its broadest sense is inevitable and of such training value, we have any right to ask God to preserve us from it, or if, in its narrower sense, it is evil and a definite solicitation

to sin, we can conceive of a perfectly good God bringing us into it.

I think that the dilemma can only be avoided by regarding this as a prayer for protection in temptation, and linking closely the last two clauses. If the first clause stood alone, we should have to give the word a much narrower meaning than we have used above, and regard the prayer as a petition that we might be spared the solicitation of some form of evil to which we were especially prone, as we might ask for protection from a disease which was raging about us. That would be a perfectly natural petition, expressing the humility of the prodigal who, knowing how easy it is to fall, begs to be preserved in the future not only "from the dangers which may happen to the body, but from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul"; the inner tendency to respond to the outward temptation.

But I feel that this interpretation gives too restricted a meaning to temptation to be true to life or worthy of the high ideals of the whole Prayer. It may be natural for the humbled son to ask to be kept safe for ever from further risk, in the father's house, but while deprecating all bravado which runs out to incur danger, we should prefer that he expressed his willingness to meet it, if the Father willed, and asked for protection if it came.

And that surely is the exact significance of the two clauses if we keep them closely joined. We have not our Lord's own words, and I should like to think that in the Greek translation the little word *but* has not done full justice to the sequence of the thought;

that it ran more nearly "Bring us not into temptation *without* delivering us from evil." If this be impossible on linguistic grounds, we can still unite the two clauses closely in our minds, as it is precisely what we need ourselves, and what we can imagine the prodigal saying, as we catch our last glimpse of him as he returns to the old home in the twilight, holding fast to the father's hand.

For the finest sonship is not that of the nursery, but the tested relation of later years. Life is not a coddling, but a stern school and a great adventure. The ideal son was not the one who ventured forth and fell, nor the elder brother who stayed at home thinking to escape the risk, but the Perfect Son Who set out into the far country in search of the prodigals, faced its dangers and returned triumphant. "Who was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin; and in that he suffered, being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted."

EPILOGUE

*For Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.*

THE petition for future protection concludes the Prayer of the Perfect Son, as it stands in the earliest manuscripts of our gospels, and as it is reproduced in the Revised Version. A little later, when the prayer was in general use, both for private and congregational worship, it was rounded off with a doxology which has crept back into the words of the Bible. In a similar way the Church added the *Gloria* to the Psalms, thereby claiming the old Jewish hymns for Christian use. But in this case she has taken Christ's Prayer, and by projecting it against the background of the Universe, has claimed Our Father to be the Eternal God reigning over all.

"For Thine is the Kingdom"; the mighty purpose with which the Universe moves on to its destiny; "and the Power," which sustains, controls and directs it all; "and the Glory," the highest values in it which the mind of man can conceive; "For ever and ever," not simply in the little story of time as revealed to us on Mother Earth, but through time, and beyond time, to all eternity.

It is a glorious conclusion; it takes from the altar the old lantern with which we started our pilgrimage, and it places it on high above the Church tower,

where like some great beacon it can send its light penetrating into the mysteries of the outer world. Ages ago young Isaiah went into the temple where he had been so long accustomed to worship Israel's Lord, and he caught a vision of God's real greatness, extending out over all human life and beyond it. He has left his record of the great experience in words that can never die. "I saw Jehovah, sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Above Him stood the seraphim . . . and one cried unto another saying, Holy, Holy, Holy is Jehovah Sabaoth, the whole earth is filled with His glory."

As we repeat the familiar words of the perfect Prayer in our own room or before the altar in church, we know something of that intimate sense of sonship to a personal Father which only religion can supply, and which grows deeper with every advance of our devotional life. But in these concluding words we extend that vision until the Father of our Lord has transcended the limits of the Church, and "the whole earth is filled with His glory."

For there is so much in the world that belongs to Him; the daily toil by which man labours for his bread and the vast net-work of commerce which binds the whole world into ever closer family ties; the happiness of home and the love of parents and lovers; the zeal of the social reformer and the patient ministry to the sick; the simple kindliness which sweetens life and the passionate search for truth by student and scientist. The pity is that so often the inspiration of His presence is lost in all these activi-

ties ; men do His work without hearing His words of encouragement, miss the wood for the trees, specialize on detail and forget the whole, concentrate on the process and ignore the purpose.

It is our task from within the Church so beautifully and fully to represent the claims of the Father, not only with our lips, but in our lives, that we may compel the world to listen and to realise His adequacy for all the final problems of life. On to the darkness of those ultimate mysteries we project the Face of the Son of Man, preserving the personal touch which might otherwise be lost in the vastness of God's Universe. And we pray for the day when secular thought and religious devotion may unite again to restore the broken unity of life, so that alike from Altar and street, from schoolroom and factory there arises in mighty chorus that Prayer which was given to us by the one Perfect Son :

Our Father, Who art in Heaven ;

Hallowed be Thy Name.

For Thine is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory,

For ever and ever.

AMEN.



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